

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

Host:

Welcome to Part II of the Dual Language podcast hosted by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA). We are here again with Dr. Elizabeth Bucknor, Education Program Specialist at OELA. Joining Elizabeth today are Dr. Louise Lockard from Northern Arizona University and Dr. Marco Bravo from Santa Clara University. In Part I of this two-part podcast Dr. Coady described the historical context of dual language programs and spoke about the importance of dual language programs in rural communities. We encourage you to listen to Part I of this podcast. It can be found at www.ncela.ed.gov under Resources tab.

Today, Dr. Marco Bravo and Dr. Louise Lockard 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. Let's get the conversation started! We will begin with Dr. Bravo.

Elizabeth:

Hello, again. I'm Elizabeth Bucknor, and I'm here with Dr. Marco Bravo. Welcome to the podcast, Dr. Bravo and thank you for talking with us today.

Dr. Bravo:

Thank you, it's my pleasure to be here with you.

Elizabeth:

Your current work is largely focused on the decision-making process in elementary dual language programs about what language to use when teaching different content areas. Why does this matter?

Dr. Bravo:

The goal of dual language programs is to cultivate bilingualism and biliteracy. Often, programming decisions are made with a focus on language arts and what language students will read in, not always with a focus on what language will be used to teach math or science. It is important to recognize that math, for example, is also a language rich content, and learning a new language in the context of mathematics can provide students with a wider view of the form and function of language. For example, the understanding of collocations, where a combination of words are often encountered together rather than apart, as in *absolute value* or *prime number*, can be best taught in a subject like mathematics where this is more common than, say, in a narrative book students would read.

This conception of stronger considerations to the language of instruction of other subjects as well as language arts challenges the theoretical frame upon which dual language programs are traditionally built, where the focus is mostly on the language arts.

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Elizabeth:

You seem to suggest that our understanding of the relationship between language and content has changed and that this should influence how dual language programs are built. Is that the case?

Dr. Bravo:

Language is a tool for understanding concepts and ideas. Those concepts and ideas can be found beyond the language arts and in subjects like mathematics and science where students learn to explain how a chemical reaction happens and how to argue about the most efficient way to solve an algebraic equation with a claim, evidence, and reasoning.

Decisions about what language subject areas should be taught in, deserves some additional consideration to help emergent bilinguals build a solid linguistic foundation within dual language programs. Such considerations would realize the goal of biliterate/bilingual students.

Elizabeth:

We know that students bring a multitude of assets with them to the classroom. Could you elaborate on how dual language programs capitalize on English learners' linguistic strengths in different ways than other programs?

Dr. Bravo:

Emergent bilinguals bring with them a dual language lens through which they view the world. This gives them metalinguistic awareness, an ability to think about the nature of language in abstract ways. I recall a study conducted with young bilinguals and monolinguals where children were asked what would happen if we called the "moon," "cow." Monolingual children were more likely to say the "moon would moo," associating an intrinsic value to the object and word that represented that object. Young bilinguals were more likely to say, "we would call the moon cow." For young bilinguals, they already had two names for objects (their first and second language). This type of metalinguistic awareness can serve emergent bilinguals well in content areas like mathematics and science where students are being asked to understand the language of these disciplines.

Elizabeth:

Drawing on your research – first in science and more recently in math education – how would you respond to the idea that students learn best when they use one language strictly for some content areas and another language for other content areas?

Dr. Bravo:

Students in dual language programs bring a multitude of assets with them, including rich language resources that challenge the historical separation of languages. For example, some dual language programs are designed to have one teacher teaching in one language and another teacher teaching in another language. So, questions we are asking now include, "Is the separation of languages limiting students' ability to respond in the best language that they can?" "How does this influence students academically and socio-emotionally?" and, "Does this separation of languages affect identity?"

The best example that I can provide, which is evident in both science and mathematics, is how Spanish-speaking dual language students utilize their native language to access often very sophisticated words in English. Consider the English word “arbor,” a very scientific term. Native English speakers would be more familiar with the English word “tree.” For Spanish speaking dual language students, however, using their Spanish knowledge of the word árbol, which is “tree” in Spanish, would get them access to the word “arbor,” “arboreal,” and “arborist.” We see other examples like this where the students’ native language can be a resource in words like “dormant” and “dormir” and “lunar” and “luna.” Examples such as these also exist in mathematics in such cognate pairs as “lateral” and “lado” and “equal” and “igual.”

If dual language teachers are modeling and enforcing keeping the languages separate, a strategy like using cognates will not be implemented by students and will be a missed opportunity for dual language learners to make sense of these academic terms and the content of their learning.

Elizabeth:

You also posed the questions, “How does the separation of languages influence students’ socio-emotionally?” and “Does it affect identity?” What have you learned in these areas?

Dr. Bravo:

This is a very interesting topic. While we are mostly speaking today about language learning, there is also a great deal of language loss. The rate of language shift to English is very high. What used to take three generations to shift to monolingual English speakers, is now taking one generation. With the three-generation trend, children were able to communicate fluently with their grandparents but now, children are losing the ability to communicate with their parents.

Language loss can lead to socio-emotional issues among youth and well into adulthood. This may be the reason for the rise in language programs in colleges and universities that are geared toward heritage speakers of a language. For example, at one major university, Elementary Chinese for Mandarin Speakers was the most popular language class for incoming freshmen. Many students have shared their desire to relearn the language of their families, as they have lost the ability to communicate with elders and feel disconnected to parts of their heritage, culture, and community.

Elizabeth:

Thank you for sharing that. It is a reminder of the long-term impacts that the programmatic choices can influence. I want to revisit some of the academic long-term outcomes of dual language programs for a moment. It has been noted that language proficiency gains in such programs that are visible in the elementary grades are often not sustained throughout middle and high school. Why is that?

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Dr. Bravo:

Partly to blame for this stagnation is the availability of target language curriculum and other instructional materials across subject areas as well as a lack of qualified content area teachers prepared to teach in the target language. For example, it can be difficult to find a teacher qualified to teach chemistry in Vietnamese and to ensure there are enough students to fill a Chemistry course in Vietnamese.

With respect to the lack of qualified teachers at the middle and high school levels, here in California, few teacher education programs currently prepare teachers to be dual language teachers in secondary schools. In 2017, a review of teacher education programs that have been accredited by the Commission on Teacher Credentialing in the state to offer a bilingual authorization to secondary teachers revealed only two programs. The scarcity of bilingually authorized secondary teachers may be the reason for the limited number of bilingual programs at the middle and secondary school level.

Here at Santa Clara University we are working with surrounding middle and high schools that are offering coursework in Spanish to support the development of our teacher candidates that are developing the academic Spanish necessary to teach such subjects as chemistry, calculus, and history in Spanish to middle and high school students, with the goals of ensuring students achieve the Seal of Biliteracy, which is an award given by a school, school district, or county office of education in recognition of students who have studied and attained proficiency in two or more languages by high school graduation. It originated in California in 2008 and was formally adopted by the state in 2011. Thirty-nine States and the District of Columbia now offer a State Seal of Biliteracy.

Elizabeth:

It is encouraging to know your university and others across the country are proactively partnering with local schools and districts to understand and meet their needs. What else can teacher preparation programs and school districts do to support the expansion of dual language programs into secondary settings?

Dr. Bravo:

Now that we are in a space of dual language “explosion” this would be a good time to take advantage of the enthusiasm and see the spread of dual language programs in middle and high school settings. In line with the goals of elementary dual language programs, sustaining proficiency across languages is a life-long effort. When I ask the teacher candidates in our teacher education program about the languages they speak, they consistently state that they studied Spanish, Italian, or other languages in high school but without practice they do not feel confident teaching in those languages. Without opportunities to use the target language or languages in both social and academic settings, those once attained language proficiencies can go dormant.

Middle schools and high schools can serve to sustain those language proficiencies. As I mentioned earlier, teacher preparation programs can recruit more middle school and high school

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teacher candidates to attain a Bilingual Authorization which would allow them to teach in the target language.

Middle school and high school districts can also request that curriculum developers provide their curriculum in languages other than English. If these two issues get resolved, we get more bilingually authorized teachers and they will be supplied with the curricula they need to teach in the target languages. Then we can reach the dream that was set forth by those initial bilingual programs referenced by Dr. Coady in the first part of the podcast, biliteracy, multicultural competence, and educational equity.

Elizabeth:

Thank you so much for your time today, and for sharing your work with us. Your work and comments today have shone a light on the potential of dual language programs that have yet to be fully explored and areas of opportunity in teacher preparation and program design that exist for quality programming and growth to serve more students.

Dr. Bravo:

Thank you for having me.

Elizabeth:

We will now speak with Dr. Louise Lockard. Dr. Lockard joins us today from Northern Arizona University. Welcome to the podcast, Dr. Lockard and thank you for talking with us today.

Dr. Lockard:

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

Elizabeth:

You have spent decades working specifically with dual language programs serving the Navajo Nation in Arizona. Can you tell us a little bit about the Navajo Nation and how dual language programs there came to be?

Dr. Lockard:

In the early 1970s four independent community-controlled schools – Rough Rock Demonstration School, Ramah Navajo High School, Rock Point Community School, and Borrego Pass School – developed bilingual curriculum as part of a wider movement for local control of the schools. Bernard Spolsky, who worked to develop teacher education programs and curriculum for these schools, wrote about this effort for local control: “bilingual education is more than just an answer to a language problem; it is a central element in changing education from an alien function to one shared or controlled by the community.”

Making dual language programs a reality for Navajo students has hinged on the availability of funding sources. For example, our own teacher program at Northern Arizona University builds on earlier partnerships with the tribal education department, public and Bureau of Indian Education schools, and with earlier support from the Ford Foundation and the Annenberg Foundation.

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Not unlike the experience of Coral Way in Florida shared earlier by Dr. Coady, dual language programs for Navajo students benefitted from the U.S. Department of Education Title VII Comprehensive School Grants. The first grants were funded in 1985 and their support continued until 2003. Today, the Bilingual Education Act or Title VII is funding Diné language programs in which our students and the teachers taking part in our summer program are participating.

Those students represent an important group of schools that serve our Navajo students: Rough Rock Community School, Rock Point Community School, the Puente de Hozho Bilingual Magnet School in Flagstaff, Kayenta Elementary School, Window Rock Unified School District, and the Chinle Unified School District. These programs were originally funded by Title III OBELA Comprehensive Grants dating back to 1970. While the Bilingual Education Act started in 1968, in Arizona comprehensive programs happened in the 1980s. As you mentioned during your introduction in Part I of the podcast, our teacher preparation program builds on a 2017 OELA NPD grant.

Elizabeth:

Thank you. Can you tell us a little bit more about the Diné and Navajo language?

Dr. Lockard:

Among the languages spoken by English learners in our country, Navajo is the 13th most popular. English learners who are speakers of Diné, or Navajo, represent 0.19% of the total English learner population. This might not seem like much, but in our context it is.

American Indians and Alaska Natives make up only 1% of the total U.S. population. But American Indian and Alaska Natives account for 50% of the different, Native, languages spoken in the U.S. It is important to realize the connections between Native languages in the U.S. For example, students in our teacher summer program are currently studying linguistics with Dr. Siri Tuttle, Director of the Alaska Native Language Center. Teachers are learning about how their language is related to Diné languages in Alaska. They are learning how languages change over time as the speakers of indigenous languages adapt to changing cultural and economic needs.

For example, code-switching is the practice of going between two or more languages during a conversation to comprehend what's happening. An example of this with the Navajo language is students saying, "Store goo deya," which means, "I'm going to the store" or, "Coke shan deh," which means "Give me a Coke." In these examples, English words are being incorporated with Diné.

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Elizabeth:

Can you share with us what your work has taught you about the role the community plays in a successful dual language program?

Dr. Lockard:

Let me refer to a conversation I had with one of the teachers currently participating in our program and who will graduate in December. She shared that she is not a fluent speaker in the Diné language, but she knows enough to understand a conversation. She sees herself learning alongside her students, and she knows they enjoy that.

Like others, this is a teacher who grew up not having access to Diné during her school years. So, without the community and without a network of support, we can't teach the language to teachers and they, in turn, will not be able to teach it to another generation of students.

Elizabeth:

Could you elaborate on what teachers can do to support program success?

Dr. Lockard:

It is important that teachers see themselves as learners and as members of the community. Teachers have complex identities. For example, a sentiment expressed by one of the teachers in our program captures this complexity. She stated, and I quote, "Our Diné language and culture is what makes us who we are. I want to help foster that in my classroom so that our Diné children have a strong sense of identity and pride in who they are." End quote. The genuine connections that teachers foster are critical for successful programs.

Teachers must also be advocates for their program, their students, and their communities. Teresa McCarty, who was my mentor at the University of Arizona and a colleague of Richard Ruiz, the outstanding scholar and advocate for bilingual learning and students, was a curriculum developer at Rough Rock Community School in the 1980s. She continues to work with teachers in the Rough Rock dual language immersion program today. Terry exemplifies the commitment and scholarship of dual language educators. She has written about the need to democratize school power relations and the need for teachers to control their own pedagogy.

Elizabeth:

Can you give an example of what you mean by teachers controlling their own pedagogy?

Dr. Lockard:

Teachers need the flexibility, the space, to offer students what they know will connect to their traditions and culture. They need to be able to control how they make that happen in their classrooms. For example, a teacher in our program recently reflected that, while teaching the Reading standard on lessons and morals, she could bridge the common core standard with the Diné way of thinking by using Coyote Stories/Videos to explain certain morals and character traits. She felt that by doing so, her students would be able to relate and comprehend this complex skill because it was culturally relevant. She could incorporate the Diné pedagogy in almost every lesson, by creating an anchor and referring back to it during each step in the lesson.

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She thought bringing in the culture would create an acquisition-rich, and respectful learning environment for all students. Using cultural ideas and artifacts helps teachers bring language and content together and they need the flexibility and autonomy to do that.

Elizabeth:

How do you work to foster the development of culturally responsive teachers?

Dr. Lockard:

The way in which we have done it is by fostering strong networks, making connections between people and culture. Our current Diné Dual Language Teachers Project matches teachers with a mentor in their district, such as teachers who have participated in our programs in prior years. They act as brokers between the home and school, and work to foster connections that engage teachers, families, and students as learners while building important connections to the community as a whole.

For example, mentors plan parent literacy events and help teachers include this curriculum in their classrooms. Last year at one school, parents, teachers, and students attended a star party with experts who shared traditional Navajo stories and Western scientific knowledge. At another school, parents, secondary students, and children shared a read-aloud in Navajo. These are just some ways that the strong networks have allowed us to build sustained relationships that honor the culture of students and their families.

Elizabeth:

How can teacher preparation programs support the development of the skills such as advocacy and cultural responsiveness you just spoke about?

Dr. Lockard:

We need to create strong teacher networks. These teacher networks model equity, cultural diversity, and community involvement. Our teachers use these skills every time they speak their language and practice their ceremonies, every time they consider indigenous ways of knowing in contrast to colonial models.

Developing teacher networks has long been an extension of the work we have done at our teacher education program, but we now see it as something that needs to be purposefully cultivated. We have a network of mentor teachers at each site who work with our students and who host family literacy events which include parents, community members, and students in learning. Our mentor teachers and graduates often continue to teach in the program and to teach at the tribal college. Our graduates now serve as school board members, principals, and tribal education leaders.

Elizabeth:

Thank you so much for spending time with us today and sharing your expertise with us. Your insights about how the community really feeds teaching and how teaching feeds the community give us a framework to strengthen existing partnerships and programs and expand how we look at dual language offerings.

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Dr. Lockard:
You're very welcome.

Closing

Host:

Thanks to all of our panelists for joining us on this podcast to consider the past, present, and future of dual language programs. The ideas shared 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.

You have given us many useful teaching tips and ideas to think about as we continue to serve dual language and English learners in classrooms across the country. As this podcast comes to a close, I encourage all of you to visit the NCELA website at www.ncela.ed.gov to check out the many other resources available to teachers and administrators.