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RESEARCH ARTICLE

A longitudinal study of strengths, challenges, and inequities in a Spanish-English dual-language program

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ABSTRACT

In this longitudinal, qualitative case study, critical pedagogical and sociocultural perspectives were employed to analyze the language and literacy strengths, challenges, inequities, and gentrification issues that characterized the first three years of a two-way, 50–50 Spanish-English dual-language (DL) program's implementation, and how the DL staff addressed the challenges, inequities, and gentrification issues. Examples of strengths were a balanced Spanish-English instructional schedule, literacy materials in Spanish and English, and the presence of translanguaging. Some challenges were the required use of instructional reading materials and English report cards employed with the district's monolingual English-speaking students, and finding time to teach literacy in both languages. Several initial gentrification issues were allowing more students from English-speaking families to enroll in the DL program than students from Spanish-speaking families and not providing Spanish report cards. Although the DL personnel resolved some of the inequities and gentrification issues, the district's actions and policies undermined the DL program's bilingual and biliteracy goals. The English-dominant students were privileged compared to the Spanish-dominant students, and the DL students' English performance was prioritized over their Spanish performance. The importance of working with district staff to develop political and ideological clarity along with educational and research implications are highlighted.

School districts in the U.S. continue to implement two-way dual-language immersion (DL) programs to educate emergent bilingual students. In two-way DL programs, emergent bilingual students who speak the same minority language are taught in classrooms with students who speak English at home (U.S. Department of Education, Office of English Language Acquisition, 2015). DL teachers use the minority language and English to teach academic content to the students, who develop their second language (L2) and further develop their first/home (L1) language by participating, or being immersed, in DL classrooms (Howard et al., 2018). The goals for all the students are bilingualism, biliteracy, biculturalism, and high achievement.

Educational researchers report that both language-minority and language-majority students who attend DL programs throughout elementary school have positive outcomes. Spanish-dominant students in Spanish-English DL classrooms outperformed their Spanish-speaking peers in bilingual,

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English-as-a-second-language (ESL), and all-English classrooms on English and Spanish reading tests (Rolstad et al., 2005; Steele et al., 2017). English-dominant students who participated in DL programs not only performed the same or better than their English-speaking peers in non-DL classrooms on English tests of reading, but they also acquired an L2 (Marian et al., 2013; Steele et al., 2017)

However, researchers warn that language-minority students in two-way DL programs do not aways attain the DL goals because of inequities that privilege the English-dominant students (Cortina et al., 2015; Flores, 2019). District and school personnel specifically need to guard against gentrification of two-way DL programs (Gándara, 2021; J. A. Freire et al., 2017). Similar to what happens when a low-income neighborhood is improved, and higher-income people move in, pushing the lower-income people out of the neighborhood, two-way DL program gentrification occurs when emergent bilingual students are pushed to the margins, as the DL program addresses the demands of the Anglo (non-Hispanic white), higher-income population (J. A. Freire & Alemán, 2021; Gándara, 2021). The degree to which DL educators can prevent gentrification and reduce inequities has not been widely studied.

In this qualitative longitudinal study, we significantly advance the field's knowledge about two-way DL education by identifying the strengths of a 50–50, Spanish-English, two-way DL program's (K-2) implementation and by showing how DL personnel addressed the challenges and inequities that they encountered. In a 50–50 DL elementary program, the students receive 50% of their instruction in each language throughout elementary school.

Purpose and research questions

Our purpose in this qualitative longitudinal case study was to combine a critical pedagogic perspective (Babino & Stewart, 2018; Giroux & McLaren, 1989) with sociocultural views of literacies (Gee, 1991; Moll, 2014; Street, 2003) and bilingualism (García, 2009; Johnson, 2009) to investigate the language and literacy strengths, challenges, and inequities that characterized a 50–50 Spanish-English, two-way DL program during the first three years of the program's implementation. Critical pedagogy involves identifying the sources of inequity in an instructional setting and indicating how educators respond to them. Per sociocultural views of languages and literacies, we rejected technical and hegemonic views of language and literacy, which in the U.S. value English and skill development. Instead, we employed a sociocultural perspective that values the language and literacy practices of language-minority students (García, 2009; Moll, 2014). We combined the two perspectives to investigate three research questions:

(1) What were the strengths of the DL program's language and literacy approach?
(2) What were the language and literacy challenges and inequities that DL school staff faced?
(3) How did the DL school staff address the challenges and inequities that they encountered?

Literature review

DL experts argue that if we want language-majority and language-minority students to succeed in two-way DL programs, then the entire school staff needs to support the DL goals and pay attention to issues of status and power (Flores, 2019; J. A. Freire et al., 2017). Several symptoms of gentrification include the enrollment of larger numbers of English-dominant students compared to Spanish-dominant students and the lack of Spanish evaluations and instructional materials originally written in Spanish (J. A. Freire et al., 2017; Gándara, 2021).

To promote students' bilingual development and the status of Spanish, Howard et al. (2018) recommend that equal numbers of English-dominant and Spanish-dominant students participate in two-way DL classrooms. Cortina et al. (2015) advise that English-speaking and Spanish-speaking parents commit to developing and maintaining a community of bilingual learners. They warn that it is not uncommon for English-speaking parents to pull their children out of two-way DL in third grade because they want them to do well on standardized tests in English. To attain the DL goal of biculturalism, J. Freire and Valdez (2017) recommend that DL teachers implement culturally

responsive instruction with emphases on sociopolitical consciousness (i.e., awareness of the social and political forces that impact ethnic/racial/linguistic groups) and cultural competence.

Researchers caution that two-way DL educators need to make sure that the needs of English-dominant students and their parents are not prioritized over those of emergent bilingual students and their parents (Cervantes-Soon et al., 2017; Flores, 2019). Cervantes-Soon et al. (2017) reported that the societal language, English, often was prioritized when decisions about the DL curriculum were made, limiting instruction in the minority or partner language and on the minority culture.

Valdés (2018) wondered if it was possible for DL personnel to reduce the dynamics that privilege middle-class English-speakers compared to working-class, language-minority speakers. In an empirical study of Spanish-English DL second-graders in a 90–10 DL program, Palmer (2009) observed that the English-dominant students did not always respect the time reserved for Spanish instruction, spoke more English than Spanish, interrupted the Spanish-dominant students, and controlled their English-speaking teachers' attention.

The extent to which two-way DL personnel support translanguaging, in which bilingual individuals employ all their linguistic resources to communicate (García, 2009), is a question that still merits investigation. Somerville and Faltis (2019) argued that the typical two-way DL language policy, which mandates teaching each language separately according to time and subject (Howard et al., 2018), contradicts bilingual students' translanguaging practices. A qualitative study of two elementary DL teachers' attitudes toward translanguaging indicated that the teachers held negative views of translanguaging (Martínez et al., 2015). One teacher reported that she did not disapprove of students' oral translanguaging, but thought it was "deviant and deficient" (p. 32). The other teacher said that "balanced" bilinguals should not use both languages when speaking (p. 36).

Several researchers investigated how DL teachers tried to limit inequities that gave priority to English and English-dominant students in DL classrooms. Pratt and Ernst-Slavit's (2019) study of a third-grade DL classroom revealed that it was difficult for the teacher to create space for Spanish and the equitable participation of Spanish-dominant students without enforcing a restrictive monoglossic (i.e., single language) policy of language use. Babino and Stewart (2018) analyzed how 13 DL teachers in two types of DL programs implemented agency to counter top-down policies that privileged English. Although the DL administrators reported that the teachers had the expertise and agency to counter the DL programs' hegemonic focus on English and the monoglossic emphasis on separate language use, the teachers thought otherwise. Somerville and Faltis (2019) described how several elementary DL teachers demonstrated agency when they employed translanguaging as a tactic to facilitate their Spanish-dominant students' communication and learning even when the DL program supported monolingual language separation.

Theoretical framework

Critical pedagogy and sociocultural perspectives informed this study. Critical pedagogy facilitated our analysis of how gentrification and inequities were created or countered (Giroux & McLaren, 1989) when decisions were made about the education of DL children (Babino & Stewart, 2018). To offset inequities, P. Freire (1970) emphasized the importance of *conscientização* (conscientization) – educators' awareness of the influence of hegemonic policies on their own views and practices and their role in implementing such policies. One way to bring about transformative change is to combine *conscientização* with practice (Bartolomé, 2008), so that school personnel attain political and ideological clarity (Bartolomé & Balderrama, 2001) about the sources of inequity and take action to offset them. Political clarity refers to an understanding of power relationships that privilege the majority population and marginalize the minoritized populations. Ideological clarity refers to an understanding of unwritten beliefs that privilege the dominant societal and linguistic groups.

Consistent with Street's (2003) and Gee's (1991) sociocultural perspectives on literacies, we employed a sociocultural perspective, in which we viewed literacies and languages as social practices embedded in and influenced by cultures (Moll, 2014). Johnson (2009) explained that a sociocultural

perspective considers L2 learners to be active agents who negotiate their identities and learning through social interactions.

Supporters of a sociocultural view of bilingualism currently are influenced by Bakhtin's (1981) heteroglossic perspective, in which Bakhtin observed that it was not unusual for authors and speakers to employ multiple voices or codes in single texts or speeches. García and her colleagues (García & Kleifgen, 2018; García & Li, 2014) borrowed from Bakhtin's multiple codes perspective to argue that it was natural for bilingual individuals to utilize integrated linguistic resources (i.e., translanguaging practices), not separate "named" languages, to communicate and create meaning. In contrast to monoglossic instruction, which focuses on the instruction and development of each language individually according to monolingual standards (Heller, 1999), supporters of a heteroglossic perspective embrace bilingual and biliteracy instruction along with translanguaging (García, 2009; Li, 2018). When bilingual individuals employ translanguaging, they strategically draw from their complete linguistic repertoires to communicate. García and Alvis (2019) explained that translanguaging is a single system, in which the boundaries between "named" languages are dissolved. We employed sociocultural perspectives to inform our analysis of the language and literacy practices at the DL school.

Method

We utilized qualitative methods to create a case study (Stake, 2005) of a two-way, 50–50 DL program's three-year implementation at a school in a U.S. Midwestern city of about 87,000. About 66% of the city's population identified as White, 14% as African-American, 11% as Asian, and 7% as Hispanic or Latino (U.S. Census, 2017-2021-2021). An institutional review board approved the study. We employed pseudonyms for all the participants.

Research context

Data were collected during the first three years of the two-way, 50–50 DL (Spanish-English) program's existence. This was the first and only DL program in the district. Since the early 2000s, the school district had implemented early-exit, transitional bilingual education (TBE) programs and, more recently, a late-exit TBE program. In early-exit TBE programs, emergent bilingual students who speak the same L1 are provided L1 and ESL instruction, but moved into all-English classrooms as soon as possible (Ovando & Combs, 2018). In late-exit TBE programs, bilingual students who speak the same L1 receive L1 and ESL instruction throughout elementary school.

The principal explained that the district opened a two-way, 50–50 DL school because it needed an additional school, and had learned about the effectiveness of DL instruction with Spanish-speaking students. The district's multilingual coordinator gave talks to interested parents and invited them to submit applications for their children to attend the DL school. Although a lottery was used to select the students from English-speaking homes, it was not needed for the students from Spanish-speaking homes. All that applied were accepted. The principal thought that some Spanish-speaking parents chose to enroll their children in two early-exit TBE programs at already established schools instead of enrolling them in the DL program.

The school was located in a school building that the district previously had vacated due to a decreased school population. Although the school included students in grades K-5, during year 1, only kindergartners and first graders were admitted to the DL program. During year 2, the DL program included the former DL kindergartners and first-graders who had been promoted to first and second grade as well as new students in kindergarten and first grade. During year 3, the DL program included the DL students who had been promoted to first, second, and third grade, as well as new students admitted to kindergarten and first-grade. The other students at the school (grades 2–5 during year 1, 3–5 during year 2, 4–5 during year 3) were Spanish-dominant bilingual students who had been moved

to the school from a late-exit TBE program that the school board had closed. In year 5, the DL program would be whole-school.

Participants

The primary participants were the school principal and two DL focal teachers (Carmen and Olivia). The principal was Anglo and bilingual in Spanish and English. He had his administrative certificate and obtained his bilingual teaching endorsement during the study. Carmen taught DL first-grade during years 1–2, but retired at the end of year 2. Olivia taught second grade during year 1, and DL second grade during years 2 and 3. Carmen and Olivia were Latinas from South America, bilingual in Spanish and English, certified as elementary education teachers, had their Master's degrees and teaching endorsements in bilingual education, and had spent over 14 years teaching in U.S. bilingual education programs.

Secondary participants were the seven other classroom teachers who in year 1 taught or were scheduled to teach in the DL program in grades K-2 and who attended grade-level DL meetings (K-2) with the principal in years 2 and 3, plus the four teachers who taught the specials: art, music, physical education, and enrichment. The classroom teachers were bilingual in Spanish and English. In addition to the two focal teachers (who were Latina), two of the classroom teachers were Latina. The classroom teachers were certified in early-childhood and/or elementary education and had or were pursuing their bilingual teaching endorsements, for which they had to demonstrate language proficiency in Spanish and English. The four teachers who taught the specials were Anglo and monolingual English speakers. The principal and all the teachers were new to DL education.

According to the principal, the Spanish-dominant students at the school predominantly were Mexican-American. A few were of mixed Latinx ancestry or of Indigenous descent from Guatemala. The majority of the English-dominant students were Anglo with a few of them African-American. The principal reported that most of the parents of the Spanish-dominant students were immigrants from working-class backgrounds, while most of the parents of the English-dominant students were from middle-class backgrounds. Instead of referring to the DL students at the school as Spanish speakers or English speakers, we refer to them as Spanish-dominant or English-dominant students to reflect their developing bilingualism.

The first author, Georgia, is Anglo and bilingual in Spanish and English. She lived in Latin America for four years, and previously was a bilingual education teacher. The second author, María, is Mexican, a U.S. citizen, and bilingual in Spanish and English. She also was a bilingual education teacher. Georgia collected and analyzed the data for years 1 and 2. Both authors collected and analyzed the data for year 3.

Data sources

The table in the Appendix shows the data sources and documentation. During year 1, data were collected during the spring semester. The principal participated in two semi-structured, open-ended interviews at the beginning and end of the semester (50 minutes each) and in six informal interviews (50 minutes each) across the semester. Six classroom observations (90–150 minutes each) were conducted: two in a DL kindergarten teacher's classroom, two in the focal first-grade DL teacher's classroom, and two in the focal second-grade teacher's classroom. In addition, a semi-structured, open-ended interview (40–60 minutes each) was conducted with each teacher at the end of the semester.

For year 2, data were collected across the school year. The principal participated in 2 semi-structured, open-ended interviews (50 minutes each) at the beginning and end of the school year and 10 informal interviews (50 minutes each) across the school year. Other sources included observations of the first- and second-grade DL focal teachers' Spanish and English literacy instruction twice per month (50–90 minutes each) for a total of 24 observations; and informal interviews

(50 minutes each) with each teacher for a total of 24 informal interviews. In addition, the first- and second-grade DL students in the focal classrooms were followed throughout the school day twice, from when they arrived at the school to when they left the school. The DL focal students' instruction during each of the specials (art, music, physical education, and enrichment) also was observed (40 minutes each).

During year 3, data were collected across the academic year. Data sources for the principal included 3 semi-structured, open-ended interviews (30–50 minutes each) toward the beginning, middle, and end of the school year and 10 informal interviews (50 minutes each) across the school year. Additional data sources were 60 observations (90–120 minutes each) of the second-grade focal DL teacher's Spanish and English literacy instruction and science and social studies instruction along with 12 informal interviews (50 minutes each, across the year) and 2 semi-structured, open-ended interviews (l20 minutes each) with her at the beginning and end of the school year. The DL focal students' instruction during the special classes was observed once in each classroom (40 minutes each).

In addition, during years 2 and 3, Georgia attended the 10 collaborative meetings (50 minutes each) that the principal held with the DL teachers at each grade level (K, 1, and 2) each year, for a total of 60 meetings. In the meetings, the principal and grade-level teachers identified and resolved problems, discussed student progress, and planned future instruction.

The semi-structured, open-ended interviews were audio-recorded and later transcribed. Fieldnotes documented the informal interviews, classroom observations, and collaborative meetings. Retrospective fieldnotes documented the all-day observations, and observations in the special classes: art, physical education, music, and enrichment classes.

Data analysis

The transcribed audio-recordings, fieldnotes, and retrospective fieldnotes were read multiple times and tentative findings were triangulated to arrive at themes informed by the constant-comparative approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Major themes were separated into strengths, challenges, and inequities, and how school personnel addressed the challenges and inequities. The findings for year 1 were typed and shared with the year 1 classroom teachers and principal. The findings for years 2 and 3 were typed and shared with Olivia, the second-grade focal teacher, and the principal. Their feedback was incorporated into the paper.

Findings

Below, we discuss the findings for each research question under the following subheadings: Strengths of the DL program's approach, challenges and inequities that school personnel faced, and how DL school personnel addressed the challenges and inequities. In our discussion of challenges and inequities, we briefly discuss the linkage between our findings, the theoretical framework, and the literature review.

Research question #1: strengths of the DL program's approach

Balanced academic schedule in Spanish and English

DL students were scheduled for equal amounts of instructional time in Spanish and English during all three years. During year 1, they were supposed to receive 90 minutes of Spanish literacy instruction in the morning, and 90 minutes of English literacy instruction in the afternoon. The DL teachers also were supposed to teach mathematics in English, and science and social studies in Spanish for equivalent amounts of time. For example, in year 1, Carmen, the first-grade focal teacher, was scheduled to teach Spanish literacy in the morning for 90 minutes, and English literacy in the afternoon for 90 minutes. She also taught mathematics in English for about 50 minutes and science and social studies in Spanish for about 25 minutes each. The DL teachers followed the balanced

schedule but modified it somewhat when they did not have Spanish resources (see the translanguaging discussion below).

Provision of reading materials in English and Spanish

The district provided instructional reading materials in English and Spanish. During years 1–2, the district gave the DL teachers bilingual editions of the same basal reading series that had been adopted for the district's monolingual English-speaking students. The basal reading series provided texts, instruction, and tests in English and Spanish. During year 3, when the district chose a different reading curriculum for the monolingual English-speaking students, it selected a curriculum, Fountas & Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System (2010), which also had reading materials in English and Spanish.

Presence of translanguaging

During years 1–3, strategic translanguaging occurred at the school. The DL teachers often translanguaged during their science and social studies instruction in Spanish because they had limited Spanish resources. In a collaborative meeting, the second-grade teachers reported that they frequently introduced a science topic in Spanish; orally read or had the students read the materials in English; then employed Spanish to discuss and write about what they had read in English, as illustrated by Olivia, the second-grade focal teacher (translation in parentheses):

> Olivia tells the students that she is going to read "The world of ants" [unknown author]. After reading the book in English, Olivia asks: "Okay, ¿cuáles son las tres partes del cuerpo? "(Okay, what are the three parts of the body?)

Although the principal did not appear to know the correct definition of translanguaging, he explained that student translanguaging was accepted at the school: "What we're getting from the kids can come in multiple forms; it can come in English; it can come in Spanish; it can come in a mixture of English and Spanish, and that's not necessarily a bad thing."

Latinx cultural activities at the school

In years 1–3, the school celebrated Latinx holidays, such as, "El Día de Los Muertos" (the Day of the Dead) and Hispanic Heritage week. During year 3, the DL second graders created posters about "El Día de la Raza" (Indigenous Day)," which were displayed in the school hallway. El Día de la Raza is a Latin American, anti-Columbus Day celebration when Indigenous people, not Columbus, are recognized. Mexican-American mothers periodically sold home-made tamales at the school, which Olivia often advertised: "Ana's (pseudonym) mom made tamales to sell. They are really good! You should try them!"

The principal showed political and ideological clarity (Bartolomé & Balderrama, 2001), when he explained that it was important for the school to emphasize Latinx culture and Spanish:

> People will say, 'Well, but you celebrate a lot of Latino culture here.' [And I will respond] 'Yes, we do,' because we have to elevate the Hispanic culture more so than the Anglo culture because the Anglo culture is elevated everywhere. English is elevated everywhere … . Within these walls are the only places that we can really elevate Spanish.

Research question #2: challenges and inequities that DL school personnel faced

Overrepresentation of English-dominant students

During year 1, a major challenge was that more students from English-speaking families enrolled in the DL program than students from Spanish-speaking families. For example, in one of the three kindergarten classes, there were 15 English-dominant students (predominantly Anglo students with a few African-American students), but only 6 Spanish-dominant students along with 2 Latinx students who spoke English but heard Spanish at home. According to the principal, the district's multilingual coordinator permitted so many students from English-speaking families to enroll because she was concerned that their parents would remove them from the DL program in the upper grades, and there

would be insufficient numbers of English-dominant students for DL education to work. Her concern seemed to prioritize the participation of the English-dominant students, a symptom of DL gentrification (J. A. Freire & Alemán, 2021).

The unequal enrollment of English-dominant students compared to Spanish-dominant students was compounded by the placement of the DL program in a school that was unfamiliar to the Latinx parents, and by the fact that not all the Latinx parents understood DL education. The principal explained, "There was a little resistance with some families because they thought it was Spanish-only, and they did not think their kid would get English … or enough English."

Not enough time for literacy instruction in both languages

During years 1 and 2, a challenge that the DL teachers faced was that they could not complete their Spanish and English literacy instruction within the allocated times. For instance, during year 1, they had to conduct their basal reading instruction twice per day–in Spanish for 90 minutes, and in English for 90 minutes.

For year 2, the principal and teachers switched the language of instruction for literacy on a weekly basis rather than split a school day into two sessions. However, the teachers still could not complete the basal units of reading instruction in each language in a timely manner. The teachers also complained that they did not have enough time to complete their required writing workshop instruction in either language. They lamented that none of their students were ready to publish their writing in a week's time.

Poor quality of Spanish and unfamiliar content in the basal reading series

The basal reading series that the district provided to the DL school also was a marker of DL gentrification because it included Spanish reading selections originally written in English and translated to Spanish (Gándara, 2021). During year 1, Carmen, the first-grade teacher, complained about the erroneous use of Spanish in the translated texts. She pointed out that masculine articles often were used to refer to feminine characters, and feminine articles were used to refer to masculine characters. Olivia, the second-grade teacher, reported that the Spanish reading instruction was strongly influenced by explicit phonics instruction in English, and included an onset-rhyme approach that was inappropriate for Spanish (Goldenberg et al., 2014). As she put it, "We don't have rat, fat, cat."

In addition, some of the reading selections did not reflect the students' experiences. For instance, one of the first-grade reading passages was about students writing a petition to submit to the mayor and city council for a playground. Per district policy, the DL teachers were required to use the weekly basal reading tests to assess their students' reading performance in English and Spanish. The teachers did not want their students to perform badly because the scores were shared with district personnel. Carmen explained that she had to spend time on Thursdays teaching her first graders about unfamiliar topics that would appear on the tests on Fridays.

More English than Spanish spoken in the classrooms and at school

During year 1, the large number of entering students who spoke English compared to Spanish resulted in a major inequity because more English than Spanish was spoken in the classrooms and at the school. Carmen reported that the large number of English-dominant students in her first-grade class meant that their language (English) and their middle-class, Anglo culture (ways of interacting and behaving) dominated her classroom, prompting her to say: "La cultura en mi clase es inglés" (The culture in my class is English).

At the end of year 1, Georgia reported to the principal and teachers that she heard more English spoken at the school than Spanish. The art, physical education, music, and enrichment teachers only spoke English, and they taught the students once per week for 40 minutes each. Also, English was the language spoken for public announcements, in the hallway, and cafeteria.

Even in classrooms that were more balanced, it was difficult to get the English-dominant students to use Spanish, another symptom of DL gentrification (Gándara, 2021). For example, during year 3,

there were 9 English-dominant students and 10 Spanish-dominant students in Olivia's second-grade classroom. In the example below, Olivia was teaching social studies in Spanish when one of the English-dominant students asked a Spanish-dominant student to translate her English answers to Spanish to share with the class. When María spoke with the student about why she was not speaking Spanish, the student complained that she had not been taught Spanish, suggesting that she did not understand the immersion approach:

María: … you are not saying stuff yourself.

Student 1: Because I don't understand Spanish.

….

María: You have to try para hablar en español (to speak in Spanish).

….

Student 1: You're not teaching your Spanish. All you do is talk Spanish.

María: Well, to teach it, you have to talk.

Although the English-dominant student demonstrated English hegemony when she resisted speaking Spanish, she revealed that she was becoming bilingual. She showed that she had developed listening comprehension in Spanish because she understood what the teacher had asked in Spanish. The student also knew that she was not receiving explicit Spanish instruction. Her awareness suggested that this was a topic discussed outside of school, perhaps at home or in the larger community.

No report cards to evaluate the students' Spanish and bilingual performance

During year 1, an egregious problem characteristic of gentrification was that no report cards were provided for the evaluation of the DL students' Spanish performance. Gándara (2021) explained that when "the partner language is not valued as much as English, then the speakers of that language are not valued equally … ." (p. 528).

In addition, district personnel told the DL staff that they had to use the same English report cards developed for the district's monolingual English-speakers to evaluate the English performance of the DL students. Developmental differences in the English performance of monolingual English-speakers compared to the Spanish-dominant students who were acquiring English as an L2 or the English-dominant students who were learning in Spanish and English were not acknowledged on the report cards.

Lack of Latinx cultural activities in the classrooms

During years 1 and 2, no Latinx culturally-responsive literacy activities were observed in the focal classrooms. Carmen and Olivia reported that they no longer did the Latinx culturally-responsive literacy activities that they previously had done in their early-exit and late-exit TBE classrooms because with the 50–50 DL program, they did not have the available time. For example, during year 1, Carmen had to spend 180 minutes on daily literacy instruction in contrast to the 90 minutes on daily literacy instruction that she previously had spent in other bilingual-education classrooms. Carmen explained that she no longer had her first-graders participate in the morning message, in which she and her students shared and discussed important home and community events, or in "testimonios," a socio-political activity. Testimonios are oral and written personal struggle accounts common to Latin America that promote awareness about inequities and create unity (Saavedra, 2011).

Research question #3: how DL school personnel addressed the challenges and inequities

More balanced enrollment of entering DL students

According to the principal, during year 3, the disproportionate enrollment of English-dominant students compared to Spanish-dominant students lessened in kindergarten and first grade as the Latinx community became more familiar with the school: "I think the change has been an increase in … Latino families being aware of the program, and enrolling … their students here."

Also, at the end of year 2, a new multilingual coordinator was hired. She had expertise in ESL instruction but not in bilingual education, and left the selection of DL students to the principal. The principal's explanation that he now made sure that the two language groups were balanced when they entered kindergarten or first grade seemed to display political and ideological clarity (Bartolomé & Balderrama, 2001):

> We have an English-speaking waiting list …, and as we accept more Spanish speakers, we can take more English speakers off the waiting list. But until we do that, we can't because it … would throw an imbalance in there … . I won't go over 50 percent English speakers … in a grade level.

His comment suggested that the district previously had given enrollment preference to English-dominant students, a characteristic of DL gentrification (J. A. Freire et al., 2017).

More consecutive time for literacy instruction in two languages

For year 3, the DL staff decided to spend two weeks on Spanish literacy instruction, and two weeks on English literacy instruction. This resolved some of the teachers' complaints about not having enough time to complete literacy instruction in each language.

The teachers also incorporated thematic instruction so that there was more coherence across literacy instruction in the two languages. For example, fieldnotes from the collaborative meetings showed that the first-grade teachers spent four weeks on the theme of explorers and exploration for their social studies and Spanish and English literacy instruction, while the second-grade teachers spent six weeks on the theme of insects for their science and Spanish and English literacy instruction.

However, some of the teachers still were concerned that their students' L2 progress often was stalled or lost toward the end of each two-week period when they had to switch languages. In response, the principal re-worked the school schedule to create a daily 90-minute period in the afternoon in the non-targeted language (language not used during literacy instruction in the morning), so that the students continued to progress in that language. The teachers were supposed to spend 20 minutes on teacher read-alouds and reader-response activities and 70 minutes on writing.

The additional time for writing in the non-targeted language helped the teachers who taught second-grade, but the first-grade teachers continued to complain. Their students had minimal L2 proficiency, and still had difficulty with L1 writing. In a collaborative meeting during the fall of year 3, one of the first-grade teachers reported that her "kids still do not understand a complete thought." Another teacher said, "They can't get a beginning, middle, and end." A third teacher asked how she should correct a first grader who wrote, "Yo fuí a cuatro a walk" (I went to four a walk) when he wanted to write, "Fui a caminar" (I went for a walk).

Change in district reading materials, which included authentic Spanish texts

For year 3, the district replaced the basal reading series with the Fountas & Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System (2010), which provided reading materials in English and Spanish. Some of the Spanish materials were not translated from English, but originally written in Spanish. Although the reading levels in English were for K-5 (listed as A-V), the highest reading level available in Spanish was level N, which most students attained by the end of second grade. Therefore, viable reading materials in Spanish beyond second grade were not provided. As a result, the school returned to using the basal reading series for DL students who read in Spanish above the second-grade level. However, the

principal understood the limitations of the basal reading series and budgeted funds to purchase additional reading materials in Spanish.

Increased emphasis on using Spanish

The principal could not change the language of instruction employed by the art, physical education, music, and enrichment teachers because the district hired the teachers for these positions. However, in years 2 and 3, he required that Spanish be used for the school announcements, hallway talk, and during lunch in the cafeteria. When María asked several of the Latino second graders what language they could use during lunch, they showed that they knew the school policy:

María: Oigan, ¿sí pueden hablar inglés aquí en la cafetería o no? (Listen, can you speak in English here in the cafeteria or not?)

Student 1: No.

Student 2: Solo estamos hablando en español. (We are only speaking in Spanish).

In the spring semester of year 3, the DL teachers also tried to ensure that the English-dominant students in grade 2 spoke Spanish during the allocated instructional time. During Spanish language arts, Olivia asked her students to explain what a poem was. When an English-dominant student began to answer in English, Olivia asked her to answer in Spanish:

Olivia: Muy bien, Nick. … . Emma? (Very well)

Emma: I'm going to say–

Olivia: No, en español … . Trate, por favor … . (No, in Spanish … . Try please … .)

At the school level, some of the English-dominant students were vocal in their objection to Spanish. During year 3, the principal wanted to show the Spanish version of the Pixar movie "Coco" on a family night. However, he reported that when he explained to the families that he could only obtain the English version, a large group of English-dominant students cheered, which angered him. He said that he told the students that their reaction was unacceptable because as DL students they were expected to learn and respect Spanish. Below, he explained his anger:

> They [English-dominant students] cheer because they don't want to speak in Spanish. So I am really fighting against that and saying like, 'That's not acceptable, that's not why we are here, that's not what we believe in, that's not who we are.' It's our job to embrace both Spanish and English.

Created spanish report cards

After the principal complained about the lack of Spanish report cards, the district provided the DL teachers with stickers to post on the report cards, which gave brief evaluations of the students' Spanish language arts performance. Before year 2 began, the principal received district permission to develop a Spanish report card for the DL students' Spanish performance, which was used in years 2 and 3.

Inclusion of Latinx culturally responsive activities in the classrooms

When the school changed to bimonthly literacy instruction in each language, more time was available for Latinx culturally-responsive activities. During year 3, Olivia taught a unit on Latinx folk songs and conducted teacher read-alouds of bilingual books in Spanish and English, in which she and her students discussed cultural aspects of Latinx life. The principal also reported that all the DL teachers now began their school days with morning messages in Spanish.

Discussion, conclusion, and limitations

Discussion

The DL program's approach had several strengths that supported the status of Spanish and that of the Spanish-dominant students. Although the program's balanced instructional schedule in Spanish and English might have been restrictive because it required separate use of each language (Pratt & Ernst-Slavit, 2019), the DL teachers' implementation of the schedule ensured that half the students' academic instruction was in Spanish. The teachers' use of reading materials in Spanish and English also meant that Spanish had a visible presence in the DL classrooms (Cervantes-Soon et al., 2017). Strengths that supported the Spanish-dominant students were the program's inclusion of Latinx socio-political and cultural activities (J. Freire & Valdez, 2017), the principal's approval of the students' translanguaging, and the second-grade teachers' use of translanguaging.

One of the initial challenges – not having enough time to teach literacy in both languages on a daily or weekly basis–appeared to be specific to 50–50 DL programs. However, some of the challenges seemed to reflect DL gentrification, which can characterize other types of DL programs (J. A. Freire & Alemán, 2021; Gándara, 2021). For example, allowing more students from English-speaking families to enroll in the DL program than recommended in the DL literature (Howard et al., 2018) meant that English-dominant students and English were privileged compared to Spanish-dominant students and Spanish at the very start of the DL program (Cervantes-Soon et al., 2017; Flores, 2019; Valdés, 2018). Two other markers of gentrification were the district's requirement that the DL program utilize the same types of reading materials employed with the district's monolingual English-speaking students and the lack of Spanish report cards during year 1 (Gándara, 2021). The translated reading materials provided the DL students with grammatically incorrect Spanish, overlooked how beginning reading was taught in Spanish, and limited the students' bicultural development by presenting them with reading selections based on U.S. culture. The lack of a Spanish report card sent the message that the DL students' Spanish performance was unimportant.

Another challenge that adversely affected all the DL students was the requirement that the DL staff use English report cards developed for monolingual English speakers, and not adjust them for students who were learning English as an L2 or who were becoming bilingual. This policy devalued all the students' bilingual development.

It is important to acknowledge that there were links between the district staff and several challenges that resulted in gentrification and inequities at the DL school. Some of these might have been due to the district staff's lack of knowledge about DL programs and bilingualism. However, a critical pedagogic analysis (Giroux & McLaren, 1989) suggested that the district staff prioritized the DL students' English performance over their Spanish and bilingual performance (Cortina et al., 2015) and the performance of the English-dominant students over that of the Spanish-dominant students (Cervantes-Soon et al., 2017; Flores, 2019; Palmer, 2009). This finding indicates that for DL programs to succeed, it is not sufficient for all the DL staff to support the DL goals (Flores, 2019; J. A. Freire et al., 2017); the district staff also has to understand and support the DL goals.

To their credit, the DL principal and teachers made changes to the DL program, which resolved some of the challenges, inequities, and gentrification issues. The principal reduced gentrification when he developed a Spanish report card; required that Spanish be used for public announcements, in the hallways, and in the cafeteria; confronted English-dominant students when they disrespected Spanish; made an effort to find authentic reading materials in Spanish; required that all the teachers implement the morning message in Spanish; and reported that he publicly supported the use of Spanish and Latinx cultural activities at the school. Most importantly, by year 3, with a change in district leadership, the principal was able to enact a policy to not admit more students from English-speaking families than from Spanish-speaking families.

The school staff also tried to limit the inequities that privileged the English-dominant students. Similar to the students in Palmer's study (2009), the English-dominant students did not readily speak Spanish. In response, during the second semester of year 3, the second-grade teachers requested that

the English-dominant students speak Spanish during the allotted times. With the change in how literacy instruction was scheduled, the teachers also had more time to implement Latinx cultural activities in their classrooms.

Conclusion

Some of the challenges and inequities occurred because district personnel mandated that the DL teachers and students employ the same curriculum and materials that were employed with the district's monolingual English-speaking students. This type of hegemonic decision-making is characteristic of gentrification (J. A. Freire et al., 2017) and makes it difficult for bilingual students and their teachers to succeed, regardless of the type of bilingual education program implemented.

Although DL programs show promise for the improved academic performance of emergent bilingual students, not identifying and addressing the gentrification and implementation challenges that DL staff face is a sure way for the programs to fail. One way to address these challenges is to work with district and school staff to develop political and ideological clarity (Bartolomé & Balderrama, 2001; J. A. Freire et al., 2017) so that they see the inequities inherent in their decisions and take action. In this study, employment of a critical pedagogic approach (Giroux & McLaren, 1989) revealed a number of gentrification issues that were preventable.

Limitations

One limitation was that the study did not include interviews with district personnel about the decisions involved in the establishment of the 50–50 DL program. Another limitation was that interviews with DL parents and community members about the DL program and its implementation were not conducted. Although longitudinal studies of DL programs are difficult to conduct because of the attrition of school personnel and students, extending the study during the fourth and fifth years of the DL program's implementation might have differentiated between initial gentrification and implementation problems and inequities versus long-term problems and inequities. These are topics that we encourage other researchers to pursue.

Implications

When school district personnel choose to implement two-way DL programs, they need to include local experts from the bilingual community in the decision-making so that some of the inequities reported in the DL classroom implementation research (Cervantes-Soon et al., 2017; Cortina et al., 2015) are not duplicated. For instance, a more balanced enrollment of the two language groups in the DL program might have occurred if district staff had asked the Latinx community where they wanted the DL program to be located.

Bilingual-education teachers often are not taught how to support DL students' L2 acquisition through sheltered instruction and immersion (U.S. Department of Education, Office of English Language Acquisition, 2015). Therefore, we recommend that all DL teachers be provided with professional staff development on sheltered instruction and the role of immersion in students' L2 development.

Young students enrolled in DL programs do not make the decision to participate in DL programs; their parents make this decision. To improve English-dominant students' motivation to acquire and use the L2 and Spanish-speaking parents' understanding of DL programs, we recommend that DL experts and educators spend time educating the local community and current DL students and their parents about the processes and benefits involved in DL participation.

A strength that was not mentioned in the findings was the principal and DL teachers' use of the collaborative meetings to problem-solve challenges and inequities. We recommend that other DL

programs consider utilizing collaborative meetings to identify, monitor, and resolve challenges and inequities.

Several research topics need to be pursued. Some of the problems identified in this study probably are characteristic of other DL programs, such as the lack of science and social studies reading materials in Spanish. It also is likely that finding sufficient time for literacy instruction in both languages is common to other 50–50 DL programs. However, the extent to which DL programs in general face challenges and inequities similar to those in this study is a topic that should be investigated. We also need more empirical studies on how district and school personnel, along with parents and community members, prevent and resolve gentrification issues, implementation challenges, and inequity problems in two-way DL programs.

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Appendix

Table A1. Data sources and documentation.

Participant, Data Collection Activity, and Documentation	Year 1: Spring Semester	Year 2: Academic Year	Year 3: Academic Year
Principal			
Semi-structured, open-ended interviews, audio-recorded and transcribed	Two (50 minutes each, beginning and end of semester)	Two (50 minutes each, beginning and end of academic year)	Three (30–50 minutes each, beginning, middle, and end of academic year)
Informal interviews, fieldnotes	Six (50 minutes each, throughout semester)	10 (50 minutes each throughout school year)	10 (50 minutes each throughout school year)
Classroom teachers (one DL[a] kindergarten, one DL[a] first-grade, one non-DL[a] second-grade teacher in year 1, but DL[a] during year 2 and 3)			
Semi-structured, open-ended interviews, audio-recorded and transcribed	One for each teacher (40–60 minutes at end of semester)	Not Applicable	DL[a] second-grade focal teacher: two (120 minutes each at beginning and end of year)
Informal interviews, fieldnotes	Not Applicable	DL[a] first-and second-grade focal teachers: 12 each (50 minutes each across school year)	DL[a] second-grade focal teacher: 12 (50 minutes each across school year)
Classroom observations, fieldnotes	DL [a] kindergarten, DL[a] first, and second-grade teachers' classrooms: two each (90–150 minutes each at semester beginning and end)	DL[a] first and second- grade focal teachers' classrooms: 12 each (50–90 minutes each across school year)	DL[a] second-grade focal teacher's classroom: 60 observations (90–120 minutes each across school year)
First and second graders from focal classrooms			
All-day observations, fieldnotes and retrospective fieldnotes	Not Applicable	Twice, from school arrival to departure	Not Applicable
Observations during specials: art, music, physical education, enrichment, retrospective fieldnotes	Not Applicable	Once in each special (40 minutes each)	Once in each special (40 minutes each)
Collaborative meetings among principal and DL[a] grade-level teachers (K, 1, 2) fieldnotes	Not Applicable	10 (50-minute meetings for each grade level–K, 1, 2 – across school year for 30 meetings)	10 (50-minute meetings for each grade level–K, 1, 2 – across school year for 30 meetings)

DL[a] = Dual Language