

English and Spanish “*¿Para un Futuro?*” Immigrants Consider Two-Way Immersion

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The public debate argued . . .

Placing the two-way immersion (TWI) program at various schools throughout the district:

“would spread the **burden** of delivering bilingual education, the positive influence of the TWI model, and the wonderful diversity of the Latino children and families to their neighborhood schools.”

But the immigrant families said . . .

“A mí me gusta que él sepa de los dos, hablarlos y leerlos y entenderlos. . . . para el futuro de él mismo.”

I really like that my son knows two languages, knows how to speak them, and to read them, and to understand them . . . for his future.

– Sra. Fernández, Mexican immigrant mother of three

“We learn Spanish *and* English!”

– Diana, her daughter (7 yrs), a two-way immersion student

Today’s Agenda

- Research project & questions
- Data collection
- Research results
- Implications (and challenges) for language immersion policy and program development
- Discussion

Research Rationale

- 25% of U.S. students have at least one immigrant parent
- Growth of “two-way” immersion policies
- Immigrants often left out of or ignored in public debates over language education (Valdés, 1997)

Research Questions

- How do *immigrant parents* make sense of new language immersion policies?
- How do the *children* of immigrants talk about their language education?
- What does this tell us about the implementation and potential success of language immersion education?

Research Frameworks

- Study of educational policy
 - Often neglects family viewpoints
 - Person-centered, interpretive approach
- Study of childhood(s)
 - Children as brokers between schools and families

Data Collection

- Engleville suburb: 15% “Hispanic” students
- Followed policy development over 4 years, which included:
 - 18 months of participant observation with six case study families from Mexico
 - 150 sets of field notes with transcribed conversations
 - 11 transcribed semi-structured interviews

Research Participants

Name (Pseudonyms)	Children’s Grade/Gender	Bilingual Education Experience
La Familia Balderas	7 th grade, female 2 nd grade, female Pre-school (3), female 2 years, female	TBE through 2 nd grade TWI, starting in 2 nd grade (Headstart) -
La Familia Fernández	Freshman, male 2 nd grade, female 1 st grade, male	TBE through 2 nd grade TWI, starting in Kindergarten TWI, starting in Kindergarten
La Familia Gutiérrez	8 th grade, female 3 rd grade, male Pre-school (4), male	TBE through 4 th grade TWI, starting in Kindergarten (Headstart)
La Familia Inez	1 st grade, female Pre-school (4), male	TWI, starting in Kindergarten (Private dual language pre-sch)
La Familia Navarro	8 th grade, male 2 nd grade, female Kindergarten, male	TBE through 2 nd grade TWI, starting in Kindergarten TWI, starting in Kindergarten
La Familia Pérez	1 st grade, female Pre-school (3), male	TWI, starting in Kindergarten (Private dual language pre-sch)

Analytical Procedures

- Open coding of field notes and interviews for parents’ and children’s views on language, two-way immersion, bilingual education policies.
- Refined coding of:
 - Parents’ aspirations for children
 - Parents’ and children’s shared policy activities
 - Children’s talk about school

Assertions: Immigrants’ and Children’s Perspectives

1. The public discourse shaped parents’ aspirations for their children’s bilingualism.
2. Parents understood policy through everyday experiences, like helping children with homework.
3. But children revealed that the policy’s *bilingual* goals were not always being met.

Parents and Policy: The Benefits of Being Bilingual

What are the program’s goals?

- Students develop high levels of proficiency in both English and Spanish.
- Students develop positive attitudes about language and culture.
- Parents are encouraged to take part in classroom and after-school activities.

Parents and Policy: The Benefits of Being Bilingual

- “Estudia mucho para que seas alguien en la vida. Para que no seas como nosotros, que no, no pudimos estudiar, sí verdad, como lo que nosotros hubiéramos querido, pero por falta de economía. . . . Pienso que le ayudará mucho también para, para el futuro de él mismo, porque ahorita como en los trabajos, puede trabajar en un trabajo donde se requiere bilingüe.”
- *[I tell my son to] “Study a lot in order to be someone in life. So that you are not like us, who were not, not able to study, you know, like we would have wanted to, but could not, for lack of economic resources.” . . . “I think that [being bilingual] will also help him a lot for his own future, because right now, like in the workforce, he can work at a job where they require one to be bilingual.”*

Understanding Policy: Homework & School-Home Connections

- mothers regularly flipping through their children’s backpacks and “homework folders,” finding information in Spanish
- parents signing children’s notebooks
- children asking their parents (and sometimes older siblings) for help with assignments, in Spanish

Understanding Policy: Homework & School-Home Connections

- Sra. Balderas: “Entonces, ahora que está en ese program, está feLIZ. Es contenta. Ella está superANDO. Ahorita, me mandaron una nota de su maestra, diciéndome que Jasmine está mejor y mejor!”
- *So, now that she is in that program, she is HAPpy. She’s content. She is exCELLing! Just now, her teacher sent me a note, saying that Jasmine is doing better and better!*

Children and Policy: A Focus on English

- Samuel (*in English*): “I don’t know how to speak lots in English.”
- Reading is “not mostly difficult,” but writing is. “Like the *ISAT* test, it is only in English.

Conclusions

- Immigrant parents hope for academic abilities in both target languages.
- School artifacts & home-school communications (in home language) shape parents’ beliefs about school.
- But other policies can come into conflict with immersion goals, and children quickly pick up the importance of the *English* language.

Policy Implications/Questions

- Public discourse shapes parents’ beliefs.
- Home-school communications, homework, and children also matter for families’ understandings.
- Other federal or district policies may affect or change the nature of the immersion program.

Re-constructing Education Policy

As Sra. Perez asked: *Is the goal of two-way immersion methods to take away the "limited" aspect of children's language abilities in English? Or is it to foster bilingual proficiency in a group of children from two different language backgrounds?*

