

Dual language programs essay



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Introduction Due to high mobility, rapid change, economic growth, and other factors, increasing deculturation has become a current global issue that has begun to affect education (Cornish, 2005). Deculturation usually occurs when a person moves to a country where people speak a language and have a culture they do not understand or are familiar with. Cornish (2005) also states that today individuals do not have to move to another country to experience deculturation, they are able to experience deculturation when people of other cultures immigrate and their culture takes over part or much of their culture. Because this has become such an impact on the United States of America, our educational system has also had to make modifications in order to serve students of diverse cultural backgrounds.

In March of 2007, the Census Bureau gathered data from a survey where it was evident that Hispanic immigrants are the largest group of immigrants into the United States. The table below shows that 48.3% of immigrants that enter the United States are Hispanic. Given that the Hispanic population has continued to grow, public education has created programs such as dual language (DL) to assist not only the Hispanic students to learn English, but also American students to learn Spanish. DL is a form of education in which students are taught literacy and content in two languages.

DL programs use the partner language for at least half of the instructional day in the elementary years. This type of program usually begins in kindergarten and extends for at least 5 years. These programs aim for bilingualism, biliteracy, academic achievement equal to that of students in standard programs, and cross-cultural competence. Review of Literature Banks (2003) expresses that in order to create multi-cultural awareness and

understanding we need to begin by educating our students on becoming multicultural citizens. His definition of a multicultural citizen is a person who is able to recognize and legitimize the rights and needs of other citizens and maintain commitment to both their culture and the national culture.

In our current state of multicultural growth it is important that we begin to educate students on how their cultures may have national and global effects and in turn how international events affect them. According to Banks (2003, 11), " Non-reflective and unexamined cultural attachments may prevent the development of a cohesive nation with clearly defined national goals and policies". The United States has always been a country of diverse cultures; however, with the large influx of Hispanic immigrants entering the country we have seen some cultural changes. Some may believe that by becoming more culturally aware we would betray our country; on the other hand becoming multicultural citizens would strengthen the country. Banks (2003) stated that a nation that alienates cultural groups runs the risk of creating alienation and cause these groups to focus on their own concerns rather than on the goals and policies of the nation.

Education is the foundation of any great nation and students must be given the opportunity to acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and skills to function within our culture that is and will continue to be diverse in race, ethnicity, culture, language, and religion. Wiley (1997) examined four myths of language diversity and literacy and used historical and contemporary data to disprove them. The first myth was that the English language is threatened. Through U.

S. Census data Wiley (1997) found that in 1990 13.8% of the population spoke a language other than English. Based on this information it is evident that English is the dominant language in the United States and that the country is better described as a multilingual nation.

The second myth was English literacy is the only literacy. Many people confuse being literate in English with being illiterate. Many immigrants may not be literate in English, but are literate in their native language thus making them literate. These people are not illiterate; they are limited English proficient.

Wiley (1997) states there are three patterns of literacy among minority groups in the United States: 1)Native language literacy 2)Second language literacy 3)Biliteracy Myth number three was English illiteracy is high because language minorities are not as eager to learn English. Many have the opinion that many non-English speakers are too loyal to their native languages and cultures and as a result do not want to acquire literacy in English (Wiley, 1997). When Proposition 63 passed in California there were more than 40,000 adults on waiting lists to learn English; this did not happen only in California, but all across the country. The last and fourth myth was the best way to promote English is to immerse individuals in English-only instruction. This myth has been proven false time and time again.

Current research on bilingual education for children and adults indicates that the bilingual education approach is generally more effective than the English-only approach (Wiley, 1997). Wiley (1997) found that many other language scholars also state that minority children should be seen as an

opportunity to develop bilingual adults. Through DL education we can teach students to become bilingual and biliterate. Collier & Thomas (2004) clearly defined two types of DL learning education. The first was one-way programs, in this program only one language group is being schooled through the two languages.

For example, a group of students may be proficient in English, having lost their heritage language and the other proficient in Spanish and beginning to learn English. Collier & Thomas (2004) also indicated that this does not only take place in Spanish communities, but also along the U. S. -Canada border (Franco-American heritage) and American-Indian schools.

The second type of DL learning is two-way programs. Two-way programs have the demographics to invite native-English speaking students to join their bilingual and English Language Learners (ELL) peers in an integrated bilingual classroom. This program permits for all and any student to enroll, even those who speak only English. In this program it is preferred that there is 50% of each language background (Collier & Thomas, 2004).

Although both programs are different in the classroom dynamics the programs basic principles remain the same. In order for either of these programs to be effective, a student must complete a minimum of 6 years of bilingual instruction, the two languages of instruction must be separated, the core academic curriculum should be used, use of high cognitive demand of grade-level lessons, and collaborative learning should take place (Collier & Thomas, 2004). DL programs are relatively new in the United States. After the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in

1994, a large federal effort related to the education of dual language students was launched (Garcia & Jensen, 2006). The US department of Education promoted the development of educational programs whose goal was dual language competency.

DL programs differ from other language programs because they provide high-quality instruction for students who come to school speaking primarily a language other than English and also to provide instruction in a second language for English speaking students. Garcia & Jensen (2006) found that DL immersion is an excellent model for academic achievement for all children. In a study conducted by the Center for Applied Linguistics Garcia & Jensen (2006) found that students had achieved oral English fluency by third grade and in English writing samples of fifth and sixth graders were undistinguished from those of native speakers of English. With this information it is unmistakable that students should become fluent in more than one language. Through DL programs students have the gift of developing Spanish as a second language at an early age while continuing to grow in English. For Spanish speakers the students will be able to develop English as a second language while enriching their native language.

All students will have the opportunity to develop social skills that will help them in the multicultural and multilingual country we live in. What benefits do students receive from participation in a DL program? According to Thomas & Collier (2003) native-English speakers who participated in a DL program scored higher on the Stanford9 than those in the mainstream program. English learners who were enrolled in the program for 5 years scored in the 51st percentile on the Stanford9 (reading), compared to other

English learners in other English programs who scored in the 34th percentile. Native English speakers scored between the 63rd and 70th percentile on the Stanford9, compared to mainstream English speakers who scored around the 50th percentile (Thomas & Collier, 2003).

Being enrolled in a DL program not only benefits students academically, but also socially. Students experience each others worlds and cultures, widening their world views and knowledge. The most important part in a DL program and multicultural education is its leaders. Aguirre-Baeza (2001) mentioned some important leadership traits for principals, administrators, and teachers who work within a DL program. 1) Leaders should be constructivist: sharing leadership with teachers, staff, students, and community members.

2) Educators should ensure that everyone shares in the vision of the program. 3) Faculty and staff should participate in community events: attending meetings and participate in rituals and ceremonies. 4) Leaders should consider various ethnicities when hiring personnel. A diverse population will enrich the DL program. Aguirre-Baeza (2001) stated to deny the benefits of being bilingual is to deny the existence of a global economy of production, to deny individuals their ethnicity, and to deny the United States the chance to enrich its culture. Synthesis of Articles Social realities such as multilingualism and multiculturalism have become part of the current processes of globalization.

Because immigrant students often have diverse linguistic backgrounds, it has become increasingly important to seek approaches to validate this, and other, forms of diversity within the classroom. Traditionally teachers and

administrators have applied low academic expectations to ESL and second language learners and have collectively failed to both appreciate and acknowledge non-dominant language knowledge and skill. Not only does this negatively affect immigrant children's academic achievement, it translates into other social inequalities among the school culture, like mentioned by Banks (2003). There is considerable research in the US and other countries that consistently shows that both ELL students and native English speakers benefit from instruction through two languages.

The research shows that simply adding more English-only instructional time does not result in higher achievement measured in English for English Learners; rather, the students who achieve at the highest levels in English are those who achieve at the highest levels in their home language. Thus, research shows that providing a solid foundation in the home language yields higher achievement in English (Aguirre-Baeza, 2001; Collier & Thomas, 2004; Garcia & Jensen, 2006; Thomas & Collier, 2003). By implementing DL programs, schools can expect one-fifth to one-sixth of the achievement gap for English learners to close each year (Aguirre-Baeza, 2001). There are many myths about learning a second language, whether the language is English for ELLs or Spanish for English speakers, however, even those who do not agree with bilingual education agree that learning a second language (not necessarily Spanish or English) benefits the learner academically, personally, and professionally.

Conclusion Many may feel that due to the increasing number of immigrants entering the United States, Americans will or have already begun to lose their culture. Embracing diverse cultures and learning a second language

does not betray the culture or country, but makes it stronger. With the growing global market it is vital for our young students to become bilingual and biliterate in another language other than English. We do not live in a national economy, but a global economy and to be able to compete we need to educate our children to become aware of other cultures, languages, and beliefs unlike our own. What is occurring in the United States should not be referred to as deculturation, but should be embraced as multiculturalism.

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