

ABSTRACT

Bilingualism for All?: Interrogating Language and Equity in Dual Language Immersion

Dual language immersion (DLI) programs have spread across the nation, lauded for promoting the academic achievement of the growing immigrant population while also providing native English-speaking students with the opportunity to learn a second language. Despite widespread popularity, some scholars have begun to caution that the uncritical expansion of DLI might actually be reinforcing, not reframing, social inequities. Moreover, many linguists argue that the model's strict language separation does not accurately represent the dynamic nature of bilingualism. Few studies have looked across schools within the same district to identify factors that differentially shape how students engage with and make sense of bilingualism. Taking into account the larger sociopolitical context and acknowledging student agency, my comparative ethnographic study of two dual language classrooms explores how students discursively negotiate bilingual identities across an academic year, and how these practices shape their learning and emerging bilingualism. These questions are explored through a multiphase research design that interrogates ideological discourses and classroom language practices through interviews with teachers and administrators, state and district policy analysis, videoed classroom observations, and artifact-mediated student focus groups. This study will contribute to more equitable dual language policies, practices, and pedagogies by providing insight into the multiple, interrelated factors that shape outcomes in bilingual programs and by proposing a pathway for re-envisioning language practices and pedagogies in DLI classrooms.