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## **Asymmetry in Dual Language Practice: Assessing Imbalance in a Program Promoting Equality**

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### **Abstract**

The capacity for dual-language programs to deliver specific benefits to students with different primary and secondary language skills continues to be debated. Individuals favoring dual language assert that as it relies upon a reciprocal approach, dual language students acquire dual language proficiency without the need for teachers to translate from one language to another. By utilizing and conserving the language skills that students bring, dual language students also gain cross-cultural understandings and an expanded opportunity to realize academic success in the future. Research that explores whether these programs meet the needs of monolingual and bilingual students is limited. The intent of this study is not to criticize dual language practice. Instead, it is to describe a newly implemented dual language immersion program that exists and operates in Phoenix, Arizona. In particular, this study examines the

practices of dual language teachers at Leigh Elementary School and the challenges encountered as school personnel worked to provide students with different primary and secondary language skills increased opportunities to learn.

## **Introduction**

While the efficacy of language programs remains a widely debated topic in educational discourse, researchers and planners agree that language programs do not exist within a vacuum, and that the benefits accrued by participating in these programs are likely to differ for individual students. This conclusion suggests that language programs need to be analyzed on a case-by-case basis as their success is largely affected by the context in which the language program is developed. Further, researchers indicate that micro-level and macro-level issues related to planning and implementation must be examined to understand how the sociopolitical context of schools may favor or impede planning, language program development, and the access students are provided to become proficient in using a second language for example (Freeman, 1996).

Studying dual language practice in its context is important for addressing specific language education issues. For example, investigating a recently developed language program together with its context provides opportunities to identify school factors contributing to language acquisition and loss during the early stages of that program's implementation. In addition, studying dual language practices and the context in which those practices take place provides opportunities to explain why language programs experience varying levels of success in preparing students to be bilingual and biliterate.

This paper investigates a recently developed language program in its school context. In particular, the practices of teachers in a dual language program at Leigh Elementary School are examined. Further, the challenges encountered as school personnel struggled to provide students from majority and language minority backgrounds with increased opportunities to learn through dual language are investigated.

## **Dual Language Theory and Practice: A Review of the Literature**

A review of the literature suggests that dual language programs strive to develop enhanced second language skills in all students (Valdés, 1997). Freeman (1996) suggests that effective dual language instruction occurs when teachers define bilingualism and cultural pluralism as "resources to be developed" (p. 558). Teachers in effective dual language programs generally adopt a language as resource rather than a language as problem orientation while providing instruction. She adds that language majority and language minority students are typically combined across dual language classroom settings in an effort to promote change by socializing students in ways that differ from how they are socialized in mainstream society.

In some models, language minority and majority students conduct their academic work using a language with which they are most familiar while being immersed in the language to be learned. Students receive language arts instruction, for example, in their native languages and receive all other content area instruction in the two languages of focus. Cummins (1979) suggests that allowing students to access curriculum using their native language results in their experiencing greater academic success and in students acquiring improved cognitive abilities. Cummins (1979) and others add that acquiring improved higher order thinking skills in their native language allows language minority

students to acquire higher order thinking skills in a second language as well (see for example Christian, 1996; Hakuta, 1986; Krashen, 1991; Pucci, 1994; Riojas-Clark, 1995, and Valdés, 1995).

Christian (1995) explains that dual language programs integrate language minority and majority students and "provide instruction in, and through, two languages" (p. 66). The (L1) language describes the primary or the first language of the student, and the (L2) language describes the second language or the language to be acquired. To achieve a maximum benefit from dual language, Christian (1995) indicates that students from the two language backgrounds are together in each class for most or all of their content instruction. She suggests that dual language classrooms are formed to promote positive attitudes for students towards both languages and cultures, and that dual language programs emphasize full bilingual proficiency for native and nonnative speakers.

While researchers of dual language suggest that variability exists between different programs, they nonetheless indicate that most dual language programs have three goals in common (Christian, 1995). First, dual language programs are created to help students develop high levels of proficiency in their native and a second language. Second, these programs stress that students perform at or above grade level in academic areas in both languages. Third, developers of dual language programs emphasize that students acquire positive cross-cultural attitudes and enhanced levels of self esteem.

Researchers indicate that developers and teachers of dual language programs stress students learning language primarily through content (Snow, Met, and Genesee, 1989). These individuals suggest that language is best developed within a content-based curriculum, rather than as the focus of classroom instruction. In addition, researchers, developers and dual language teachers emphasize carefully structuring the social interactional characteristics of programs as combining L1 and L2 students in the same instructional setting is believed to promote increased and better opportunities for language acquisition and development (Christian 1996). These individuals reason that by integrating students from two language groups in a mixed classroom setting, dual language offers the language learner access to practitioners and students who serve as L1 models. Additionally, these individuals suggest that this additive approach supports the ongoing development of the students' native language skills while a second language is being learned.

Christian (1996), Gonzales and Lezama (1974) indicate that dual language programs generally use one of two models. The first, or "90/10" model, finds Spanish, for example, being used for approximately 90% of the instructional time. The use of English as the medium of instruction is gradually increased until the proportion of instruction is "50/50". Under the "90/10" model, students whose primary language is English are immersed in Spanish, while students with a primary language other than English receive L1 instruction with a gradual introduction to English as the primary mode of instruction. In this case study, a "50/50" dual language model was used. In the "50/50" model, the percentage of L1 and L2 instruction is equal from the beginning (Christian, 1996; Gonzales and Lezama, 1974).

## **Methodology**

The description of the methods used for collecting the data and completing this study are separated into five parts. Part one describes the documents that were collected and studied to learn about the operation of the dual language program. Part two describes the techniques used to complete the observations. Part three describes procedures that were followed during interviews with participants. Part four describes

methods of data analysis, and part five introduces the theoretical framework used to complete this study.

## **Documentation**

At the onset of data collection, a three-ring binder containing statistical and demographic information about Leigh and Leigh's community was provided to the researchers. Included in this folder were test score results, the school calendar, publications written in two languages used to recruit parents and students into the program, and other school publications describing the dual language program. In addition, advertisements and other announcements that were made available to the general public and throughout Leigh's campus were gathered and studied.

## **Observations**

The sample included in this study was deliberately chosen and observed in each participating classroom. This resulted in six different classrooms being observed. Specifically, observations were completed in two classrooms per kindergarten, two classrooms per the 1st grade, and two classrooms per the 2nd grade. Although the program operated through the 3rd grade, observations in these classroom settings were not conducted.

Over a period of two years, approximately 50 hours of observation time, of which most was spent in the Spanish-speaking classrooms, were completed. The lengths of each observation ranged widely. Two or three of the observation periods lasted as long as 4 hours in a particular classroom setting while other observation periods lasted no more than 15 minutes in another classroom. Observation periods were determined in relation to daily classroom activities, and by using teachers' suggestions regarding key opportunities that should be observed. Observations were conducted as a complete observer, and neither the primary investigator or the co-author of this study participated in the activities of the classroom whatsoever.

The first year of this study was no more than an introduction to the site and the program. Although some preliminary assertions emerged within this phase, these assertions were only hunches and were not in anyway found to be supported by data. Continuing on with the second year of this study in order to test those preliminary assertions, additional observation data was compiled to investigate other themes and to conduct an in-depth analysis of the dual-language program as it existed in its school context.

## **Interviews**

Two formal interviews were conducted with the program director. The first was introductory. Findings from this interview almost entirely dealt with programmatic issues, guidelines, operations, and objectives. A second interview with the program director was held with a different intent. This interview came at a strategic time in the research. During this interview the main goal was to compare data generated during the observations with the director's perceptions of the program. Although some programmatic issues were discussed, this second interview delved more into theoretical issues that were related to working hypotheses. As such, this interview served as one of two total member checks. The second member check was conducted after a final draft of

this paper was composed. The program director read the manuscript and provided feedback and other ideas to consider, many of which were re-worked into the manuscript.

Later, one informal interview with a board member and many other informal interviews with the teachers were conducted. These informal interviews occurred between class periods, on walks to the cafeteria, and sometimes, although efforts were made to avoid this practice, during instructional time.

## **Data Analysis**

According to Erickson (1986), "one basic task of data analysis is to generate [these] assertions, largely through induction" (p. 146). In this study, the entire data corpus was analyzed for underlying themes. Following Erickson's (1986) procedures of data analysis, the data resources were converted by the primary author into items of data by rereading and revisiting the data corpus. Next, the data were coded by circling, in colored ink, analogous instances that related to the working assertions. From this, various instances and fragmented pieces that supported each assertion were sorted in order to "make clear to the reader what is meant by the various assertions, and to display the evidentiary warrant for [each of] the assertions" (Erickson, 1986, p. 149).

Through data analysis, it was especially important to be sensitive to "discrepancies between the ideal plan and its implementation" (Freeman, 1996, p. 563). One of the fundamental principles of dual language/bilingual immersion programs relates to insuring equal access to educational opportunity. In reference to bilingualism and bi-literacy, Freeman (1996) advises that "the explicit goal is for all of the students to master skills in both Spanish and English through equal representation and evaluation of Spanish and English" (p. 579). Moreover, equal attention and respect are to be given to the two languages spoken by the community's population, Spanish and English, in order to promote equal appreciation and involvement with the two languages, and to develop practices that are effective for schooling all Leigh students.

## **Theoretical Framework**

It may be argued that symmetry is one of nature's wonders. In almost every shred of nature there exists some kind of underlying order. In fractals, repeated iterations of basic yet random shapes create symmetrical beauty. The simplest thread of a leaf can be reiterated millions of times to create a poised tree or the simplest geometric shape can be reiterated thousands of times to create a flower whose whorls are equalized. Each small portion of the shape, when magnified, can reproduce exactly a larger portion. Wheatley (1992) states that "Fractals, in stressing qualitative measurement, remind us of the lessons of wholeness," lessons of order, and lessons of balance (p. 129). It may also be argued that asymmetry, defined as a lack of proportion, also occurs and is atypical. As such, imbalances or inequalities may be antagonistic and may impede what is essential to complete development and balance.

Asymmetry in this paper describes the tool used to study the dual language program at Leigh. This program proposes to promote balance, fairness, and equality. To that end, instances of asymmetry must be noticed and made apparent in order to rebalance the scale and provide individuals experiencing dual language equal opportunities to learn.

Instances of symmetry were noticed when the program promoted fairness and

equality. For example, this program ensured that all school publications were printed in both Spanish and English. Ideally, this pattern was to be carried across this program to ensure an equal representation of both languages. The logistics developed in the planning period also promoted this principle of equality completely. Instances of asymmetry occurred, however, when the planners attempted to move theory to practice.

Finally, in addition to fixing a study in its contextual place, assessing the effectiveness with which program offerings provide symmetry in the form of equal opportunities for students to learn probably also requires that researchers account for the duration of the program's operation. In this research, the dual language program was in its second year of implementation. This is essential in that any assertions derived are limited by the newness of the program. On the other hand, because this program is in its infancy, an excellent opportunity to investigate how it operated within its sociopolitical context, and how it was challenged to address the call to provide equal access during its earliest stages of development was provided.

## **Findings**

Findings taken from the data are divided into two parts. Part one provides demographic and background information as understanding dual language program development and practice requires examining the sociopolitical context in which these activities took place (Freeman, 1996). Part two introduces assertions on asymmetry and is comprised of three areas. Labeled instructional asymmetry, the first area describes instances when and where pedagogical imbalances occurred. The second area, labeled resource asymmetry, describes occasions when discrepancies in the availability of materials emerged. Area three is labeled student asymmetry describing characteristics of the student population and the students themselves that made providing equal opportunities to learn problematic.

### **Demographic and Background Information**

Leigh Elementary School District experienced enormous and rapid changes in its student demographic makeup over the past several years. In 1997, 7,746 students were enrolled in the district. From 1990 to 1997, there was an 83% growth in total enrollment, a 77% growth in students classified as having a low socioeconomic status, a 132% growth in the population of ethnic minorities, and a 203% growth in students classified as Limited English Proficient (LEP). These demographic changes were accompanied by low student tests scores and by calls for school officials to develop an improved program for educating students.

According to district reports, Leigh Elementary is the most diverse of the district's elementary schools. At the time of this study, Leigh served 1250 students, a population composed of 11% ethnic majority and 89% ethnic minority students. Of the 89% ethnic minorities, 81% were Mexican- American, 4.9% were African-American, 2.5% were Native- American, and .3% were Asian-American. In contrast, Leigh's student population was socio-economically homogeneous. Almost 97% of the population participated in the free and reduced lunch program at the time this study was conducted. Further, Leigh's population was linguistically dichotomous. The proportion of Leigh's LEP students increased from 21.6% in 1993 to 70% in 1998. Spanish and English were the dominant languages at home and few students were bilingual upon admittance to Leigh.

In 1996 Leigh Elementary was awarded a Title VII Grant that funded a language program entitled the "Two-Way Bilingual Immersion Literacy in Two Languages" program. This program was developed to promote bilingualism for Leigh elementary students, regardless of their language proficiency status. By this, the program was developed to enhance access to educational opportunities for all Leigh students by providing increased opportunities for students from diverse language backgrounds to learn. This program focused on dual language immersion with the languages of focus being Spanish and English, the representative languages of the school's population.

The 1996-1997 school year was the year of planning. In the first year of implementation (the 1997-1998 school year and the second year of the grant), the program served approximately 160 students. As noted earlier, this program was still in its puerile stage just ending its second year of operation, and while Leigh's dual language program was viewed as a success by many, little external research had actually been conducted to assess this program's nature and effectiveness. On the other hand, research completed by Peña (In Press) does provide additional information about the elementary school district, the Title VII grant that funded the dual language program, and the individuals involved in developing and implementing the program.

## **Assertions on Asymmetry**

### **Instructional Asymmetry**

One finding that became apparent early during the conduct of this study was that the Spanish teachers were bilingual and the English teachers were monolingual. As such, the teachers were classified as either Spanish speakers or English speakers, and the classrooms were classified as being places where either Spanish or English was used as the sole language of instruction. Freeman (1996) suggests that the ideal dual language program calls for "the English-dominant teacher to speak and be spoken to only in English and for the Spanish-dominant teacher to speak and be spoken to only in Spanish" (p. 576). This also requires that the classroom teacher should not translate during instruction or when questions emerge. In other words, teachers in dual language programs must "be true" to their respective languages and their languages of instruction. In this sense, and consonant with the research, students should be able to identify teachers with one particular language and a specific classroom setting. Through this instructional formula, the students could also be ensured equal exposure to both languages and opportunities for language and cognitive development.

Instructional asymmetry resulted in this study when the teachers switched language codes. Again, all of the Spanish-speaking teachers were bilingual and the English-speaking teachers were monolingual. As such, the Spanish-speaking teachers were able to switch language codes. They had a greater capacity and tendency for not being "true" to the instructional language because they were fluent in two languages. For example, if a student did not comprehend what the Spanish-speaking teacher was saying, it was not unusual for the bilingual teacher to translate her message into English in order to reduce the student's confusion. None of the English-dominant teachers were able to speak Spanish, "making teacher code-switching impossible" (Freeman, 1996, p. 576). Because the English-speaking teachers were monolingual, the Spanish-speaking children were forced to comprehend English. In contrast, because the Spanish-speaking teachers were bilingual, the English-speaking children learned to rely on the on the Spanish-speaking teachers' tendency to translate.

Instructional asymmetry also resulted when teachers treated students unequally in communications. Invariably, when an English-speaking student posed a question to the Spanish-speaking teacher, the student would ask the question in English. Since the teacher was bilingual, the teacher could understand the question in English and could then respond to the question in Spanish. However, when the Spanish-speaking student posed a question, the English-speaking teacher could not understand and, therefore, would force the student to repeat the question in English. In this, the Spanish-speaking students were required to both speak and comprehend English while the English-speaking students were only required to listen to the Spanish. The Spanish-speaking teachers did not force the spoken language while the monolingual English-speaking teachers forced the spoken language because they were monolingual. In this regard, the shortage of bilingual teachers not only resulted in the students experiencing different expectations, but the monolingual English speakers were provided with fewer opportunities to speak and master a second language.

In this study, one of the three bilingual teachers would not code-switch or translate from English to Spanish. This teacher would deflect questions back onto the English-speaking students requiring them to either tap into a language broker or try to understand Spanish on their own. This teacher performed in accordance with program guidelines, and was able to satisfy dual immersion principles related to furthering equal access.

These examples of instructional asymmetry are largely due to the newness of the program and to the shortage of bilingual teachers. Although the program guidelines state that only one language is to be used to ensure full immersion, analyses of data compiled for this study suggest it is especially difficult for the Spanish-speaking teachers to withhold instruction and other types of support when they are fluent in two languages. The teacher-participants were compelled to help students experiencing frustration to learn. The program's director noted that the teachers were increasingly becoming more accustomed to staying in, or being true to the target language and not translating, but as with any new program, following these requirements appeared to take a concerted effort and time.

Finally, the primary language of the teacher and the teacher's perceptions about dual language learning appeared to have affected this program's capacity to provide students with equal access. For example, while observing an English-speaking teacher teach her mixed language science class, the teacher approached the principle investigator of this study at the back of the room to talk. This teacher said that she had been an ESL teacher up until the present year. When asked how she liked the program, she replied that she had never seen kids at this grade level learn "English" faster. From a discourse analysis perspective, her response spoke directly to her perceptions regarding dual-language instruction. Her statement implied that having the students acquire English was her priority. Her objective as a teacher in this program, in other words, may have been to emphasize English acquisition over Spanish acquisition, while not promoting both languages equally. According to Cummins (1986), reforms are dependent on the extent to which educators redefine their roles with respect to the minority. In this study, the teacher's preference for having her mixed language students improve their English proficiency may have conjured distorted perceptions relative to how the students judged themselves, their peers, their native tongue, and the need to acquire a second language.

This last observation suggests that the future success of both the students and program are probably related to the importance that educators attribute to language acquisition and to how students learn. Success may also be connected to each teacher's skill, training, and personal ideology. Cummins (1996) states that "educators who see



their role as adding a second language and cultural affiliation to their students' repertoire are likely to empower students more than those who see their role as replacing or subtracting students' primary language and culture" (p. 25).

### **Resource Asymmetry**

Classroom resources describe children's literature books, resource manuals, manipulatives at learning stations and games. According to dual language research (Freeman, 1996) and the program's guidelines, a Spanish-speaking teacher should only have Spanish resources within the classroom, and the English-speaking teacher should only have English resources within the classroom. In this study, the teacher's classroom environment was arranged at each teacher's discretion; likewise, the teachers were encouraged to stock their classrooms using materials written in the appropriate language of the room.

In this instance, an asymmetry occurred as the Spanish teachers utilized resources written in Spanish and English, and as the English teachers utilized resources that were written only in English. This resulted in students in the Spanish-speaking classrooms accessing resources in both English and Spanish while students in the English-speaking classrooms could only access resources written in English. It also resulted in opportunities to learn or read in Spanish in the Spanish speaking classes being fewer than those opportunities for students to learn or read English in their English classrooms.

Analyses of the data collected indicated that the classroom environment as designed by the teacher was also out of balance. The posters and other classroom decorations in the Spanish-speaking classrooms were, for the most part, available in Spanish and English, while posters and decorations in the English-speaking classrooms were written in English only. The dual language posters available in the Spanish-speaking rooms translated from English to Spanish and back again, and may have been instructionally useful as such. In the English-speaking classrooms however, English was the only language used on the posters and throughout the classroom environment.

The school library and the resource room demonstrated a similar pattern. Resources available in Spanish were scarce overall, while the appropriateness of these same materials for students at different levels of development was also severely limited. For example, materials written in Spanish constituted less than 20% of the total shelving area; thus, the potential for a student to find a book written in English was five times as likely as it was for a student to select a book written in Spanish. This concurs with Pucci's (1994) findings that "the school library holdings of Spanish reading materials [were] far below what even the bare minimum would warrant" (p. 78).

Furthermore, findings taken from this study suggest that the materials available in Spanish were separate from other resources and located in an isolated section of the library's shelves. This suggests that access to these resources may have been even more difficult to gain as some monolingual Spanish-speaking students could feel uneasy and struggle with selecting materials that would separate them from their peers, and, as in Pucci's (1994) study, involve them in using books and learning aids in a "section of the library [that] was easily observable" (p. 74).

As with the case of bilingual teachers, this imbalance in classroom resources may also have had disparate implications for providing students with equal opportunities to learn. Access to resources was not balanced. This suggests that the pool of available resources was deeper for the English speaking students, and that these resources may have been geared toward English-speaking students, and toward making those students

with more limited skills become more proficient in English. This lack of proportion may have reflected the newness of this program. More likely, however, this disproportion illustrated a hegemonic condition that is prevalent in U.S. society.

### **Student Asymmetry**

According to Freeman (1996), "language majority students' participation in dual-language facilitates the development of academic competence in Spanish" (p. 571). In other words, equal numbers of English-speaking and Spanish-speaking students need to participate for a "50/50" model of dual language immersion to operate effectively. Further, equal numbers of students are needed during student interactions to provide balance, and so students can be readily available as peer resources.

Characteristics related to the student population at Leigh introduced additional challenges to developing the dual language program and providing students with equal opportunities to learn. For example, Leigh's population to begin with was lopsided. Leigh's high attrition rate and high rates of student mobility also kept the program numbers in constant flux. During the second interview with the program director, she noted that "population percentages range from 54%:46% to 70%:30% (Spanish:English)." Similarly, observations revealed that the makeup of students in their classes was usually weighted heavily on the Spanish-speaking side because the program lacked English speakers to complete the "50/50" balance.

Observations of classroom experiences also revealed that separation according to language occurred widely among the students. Although the program director stated "our kids play together, our kids recess together, our kids do learning together, and that's got to impact how they think about the others... everyone is mixing with everybody in the program," separation among the students participating in the program was observed. According to the data, students separated themselves voluntarily into language cliques during formal instruction, free class time, and outside of the classroom setting. Although some of the classrooms were deliberately arranged by dual language teachers to integrate language speakers and prevent in-class separation, separation nonetheless occurred when students were allowed to make choices regarding peer interactions. For example, analyses of the data revealed that if students were allowed to seat themselves within the classroom at random or were allowed to form their own groups for group work, the students would break off into homogeneous language groups. This separation usually resulted in students associating with students who spoke the same language in other words. Furthermore, the grouping of students with similar languages and backgrounds reflected imbalances existing in the larger society. Consistent with Freeman's (1996) study of dual language programming, in other words, groupings between and among students "correspond[ed] to racial, ethnic, or class lines in society" (p. 579).

Finally, and in keeping with previous dual language research (Freeman, 1996), students acting as language brokers were expected to facilitate in the language learning process as well. Language brokers were encouraged to translate for and contribute to peers becoming bilingual and biliterate. However, due to their penchant for separating themselves from other students, the language brokers were observed as neither accessible to all students nor easy to "tap into." In short, observations revealed that the language brokers were more likely to associate with other language brokers and more likely to join the English monolingual groups rather than to interact with the Spanish monolingual students.

In this sense, these students hastened their assimilation into the dominant culture by choosing to speak the language of the dominant language group. This finding

suggests that along with language brokers being viewed as members of an education elite, students with stronger bilingual and biliterate skills preferred to associate with other students who were prized because they shared enhanced bilingual proficiency. Consistent with findings taken from his study of cultural differences, "success in school came more readily for those willing to understate, separate from or deny their Mexican culture" (Peña, 1997, p.13).

## **Theoretical Discussion on Asymmetry**

Although "English only" laws have not been voted into the U.S. Constitution, "English only" is practiced in many areas throughout the U.S. regardless of written policy. Freeman (1996) and Shannon (1995) suggest that as English is the language of the majority, equality and opportunity in the U.S. come first to those who master the English language. Relatedly, languages other than English always have had, and always may have, a secondary status according to these thinkers. As a result, it may be argued that English is the language of choice. The Bilingual Education Act of 1988 in itself mandates that students be given the opportunity to master English while not emphasizing that students improve or maintain their native tongue.

This emphasis on English only is likely to affect programs striving to promote equality through dual language instruction. As dual language programs attempt to value two languages equally, in other words, it may be predictable for programs like Leigh's to encounter resistance in moving from dual language theory to practice given the nature of their sociopolitical context. Furthermore, Freeman (1996) suggests that given internal and external societal pressures, "leakage between the ideal plan and its implementation is not only understandable but to be expected" (p. 565).

According to Fairclough (1989), the sociopolitical context describes the "dynamic interrelationships among situational, institutional, and societal levels that influence each other in important ways" (Freeman, 1996, p. 559). A crucial issue that needs examining then is how the socio-political context affects dual language program practice and reform. Further, researchers need to account for factors related to time and the relative newness of programs and school reforms. In this study, characteristics of the larger sociopolitical context and the newness of the program combined to create asymmetry and influence the lack of equal opportunities that were provided to students.

In reference to *instructional asymmetry*, it seems that a citizenry that does not favor bilingualism may not encourage educators to cultivate bilingual students in public schools. Similarly, results taken from this study suggest that while being fluent in English enhanced communication between bilingual teachers and English-speaking students, this pattern of communication may have combined with social and political preferences to encourage dual language students to become proficient in English, native English speaking students to be apathetic about mastering a second language, and dual language students to believe that English is superior to Spanish.

Furthermore, instructional asymmetries occurred due to a shortage of bilingual teachers. The aforementioned instances of instructional asymmetry occurred as a result of the Spanish-speaking teachers' capacity and tendency to communicate using English. Hence, it seems that an equal dispersion of bilingual teachers across classroom settings would prevent these inequalities, but this is not plausible. If teachers with bilingual skills were equally available in the English-only and Spanish-only classrooms, only illusions of instructional symmetry would appear. It is true the teachers' language skills would be balanced across classrooms, but the potential for code-switching and language

favoritism would now occur in both classrooms, doubling instructional errors. The instructional errors would infringe upon the program's quality by promoting inadequate, instead of unequal, opportunities to learn. Ironically then, given the findings in this study, promoting equality by equalizing the numbers of bilingual teachers would result in reduced program quality. It is possible that if teachers with bilingual skills were readily available in equal proportions, this program, and other dual-language programs for that matter, would become even more mediocre.

It may be that monolingual Spanish and monolingual English teachers would facilitate an ideal match between instructional theory and program practice. In this scenario, the instructional asymmetries that emerged in this research would more likely vanish and the program's quality could be maintained. Developing a dual-language program with monolingual teachers, however, might introduce an array of other challenges related to developing dual language programs, and to providing students with different language skills equal opportunities to learn.

In reference to assertions regarding *resource asymmetry*, findings in this study suggest that materials and resources in Spanish were most difficult to obtain. Further, being that Spanish resources are fewer in comparison to English resources in the community, materials available in Spanish are likely not only to be more scarce, but more costly to purchase. Pucci (1990), who conducted a survey of booksellers in the Los Angeles area in 1990, noted, for example, that prices for resources in Spanish are typically 20-200% higher than resources written in English (Pucci, 1994, p. 78). This scarcity of resources, when combined with higher costs, is likely to result in poorer districts like Leigh not being able to reinforce the Spanish language in the manner by which the programmatic guidelines and objectives articulated.

According to Pucci (1994), a "commitment must evidence itself in terms of tangible resources, as well as thoughtful policies" (Pucci, 1994, p. 78). Results taken from this study indicate that not only must dual language programs have such a commitment and make a deliberate effort to equalize resources, but in order for equal educational opportunities to be provided to Leigh's native Spanish speakers, extraordinary steps may be needed to purchase resources in Spanish that are not only likely to be significantly more expensive, but more burdensome for poor schools like those in the Leigh Elementary School District to afford.

In reference to assertions about *student separation*, the findings presented earlier stand as an example at the school level of what happens in the larger social context. The Spanish language may not have clout or political sway in U.S. society. Although it was developed to be a great "equalizer," this program catered to the English speakers and the bilingual students more often than those of students who spoke Spanish only.

Research cited in Cummins (1986) supports the efficacy of dual language immersion programs if the native language has a high status and is strongly reinforced in the larger society (p. 20). In this study, asymmetry resulted in the English language being viewed with a higher status. English was perceived as more prevalent and necessary making the acquisition of a second and less esteemed language that much less desirable.

## **Conclusion**

This study was important as it provided the opportunity to examine the relationship between dual language theory and practice in six dual language classroom settings. What transpired at Leigh holds meaning for how other schools develop and conduct their dual language programs. Without a systematic review of their practices, dual language programs may be subjecting students to inequality, to fewer educational

opportunities, and to policies and practices that separate students according to race, ethnicity, and language orientation. Furthermore, lacking systematic study, schools working to implement dual language programs may continue to reproduce the inequalities and injustices that characterize the wider society thus making more failures inevitable (Cummins, 1986, p. 33).

Although Leigh's program demonstrated discontinuities between theory and practice, Leigh's successes should also be recognized. The program, especially with respect to its sociopolitical context and infancy, is providing educational opportunities by offering dual language to its students. This in itself represents a departure from how language minority students typically experience schooling. However, lacking greater symmetry, the benefits of dual language may never be fully realized.

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