Creating a Culture of Equity in Two-Way Immersion Programs

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Importance of Equity

- Achievement gaps between at-risk students (race/ethnicity, SES, English language learners) and “majority” students
- Addressed through legislation/courts and through educational innovations
- What does equity look like?
  - Equity in outcomes: Parity among culturally-defined groupings in terms of outcomes like standardized test scores, dropout rates, college attendance
  - Equity in outcomes + social justice: Educational systems serve to shift power dynamics and values

Dual language programs (of which TWI is one type) come from an ideological point of view and theoretical foundation:
- Second language acquisition research
- Learning is social
- Language and culture are assets
- Integration of diverse students

Purpose of TWI
- Equity of outcomes (TWI programs are more successful at closing the achievement gap between ELLs and NES than other models)
- Raise status of partner language and culture
- Develop cross-cultural appreciation in students and families

The mainstream U.S. notion of equal educational opportunity places the burden of responsibility on the LEP and language minority students to change so that the school can treat all students equally according to language majority norms. In contrast, the Oyster notion of equal educational opportunity places the burden of responsibility on the educational program and practices to work in a variety of ways with their diverse student population so that all students can meet equally high expectations.

Freeman, 1995, p. 46
Discussion Questions

- What are some of the “burdens of responsibility” that might be placed on language minority students?
- What are some of the “burdens of responsibility” that might be placed on educational programs and practices?

Research on Equity

- Use of English and Spanish in the classroom
  - What conditions are sufficient to attain bilingualism and biliteracy?
  - If English and Spanish are used in different ways, what does that signal to students about the value of each language?
- Attention to diversity
  - How can classrooms be organized to create a learning environment that welcomes differences of all types and to allow students to use their strengths to be successful learners?
- Language ideologies
  - How are ideologies around language and bilingualism reproduced and resisted in the TWI program or classroom?

Research on Equity

Culture of equity (Howard & Sugarman, 2007)

- Value and protect time for the partner language and its associated culture(s)
  - Equal numbers of students from each language background
  - Elevate the minority language and native speakers of that language
  - Include both languages in school-wide routines
  - Conduct assessments in both languages
  - Protect Spanish instructional time
  - Students provide peer translation and second language support

Research on Equity

Culture of equity, cont.

- Enroll and provide support for students with special needs
- Employ teachers with positive attitudes toward language and culture
- Ensure teachers have abundant materials in Spanish
- Included the study of different cultures in the curriculum
Research on Equity

Other ways that equity is fostered
- Multicultural curriculum is adopted (Freeman, 1995; Potowski, 2004)
- Critical pedagogy is implemented (Arce, 2000; Takahashi-Breines, 2002; Palmer, 2007)
- Students learn from each other, cooperative grouping is emphasized (Freeman, 1995; Arce, 2000; Volk & Angelova, 2007; Fitts, 2006)
- Teachers have a positive attitude toward language learners and bilingualism (Freeman, 1995; Fitts, 2006)

Research on Equity

Critical pedagogy (Arce, 2000)
- 1st grade classroom in 90/10 program in N. California
- Pedagogy is
  - connected to students' lives
  - aimed to build students' empowerment and development of their voices
  - Build a sense of community through valuing all participants' contributions and emphasizing cooperative learning
- Focus on meaning over form
  - Constant student interaction
  - Instruction that raised social consciousness
  - NSS as experts

Research on Equity

Language ideologies (Fitts, 2006)
- 90/10 program in Colorado
- Staff highly aware of equity issues
- Ideology: All students/people are equal
  - Intended outcomes:
    - Democratic decision-making
    - Frequent use of heterogeneous cooperative groups
    - Undercut norms of individualism and competition
  - Unintended consequences:
    - Not all students are balanced bilinguals
    - Emphasis on heterogeneous groupings complicated by shifting/unclear "L1" identification
    - Gloss over real SES/language differences

Research on Equity

Ways that equity is undermined
- Teachers use English during Spanish time (Amrein & Peña, 2000; Freeman, 1995; Potowski, 2004)
- Students choose to speak English in the classroom when given a choice or Spanish is expected (Amrein & Peña, 2000; Fitts, 2006; Freeman, 1995; McCallum, 1999; Potowski, 2004; Volk & Angelova, 2007)
- There is more weight placed on English tests than Spanish (Howard & Sugarman, 2007; McCallum, 1999; Potowski, 2004)
Research on Equity

Language use (Potowski, 2004)
- Inter-American Magnet School in Chicago
- Ways that IAMS is “marked as a Spanish-speaking place”
  - Environmental print and student work in Spanish throughout the school
  - Announcements made in Spanish without English translation
  - Spanish was used to discipline or direct students in the hallways
  - “Curriculum of the Americas” which focused on one culture per year through interdisciplinary units.

Language use (Potowski, 2004)
- Ways that language use favors English
  - Teachers instruct in English during Spanish time
  - Intense preparation and concern over English tests but not Spanish tests
  - All the specials (music, gym, and computers) taught in English
  - School wide competitions held in English only
  - Student use of English during Spanish time went unchecked
  - Analysis of talk among four focal students showed Spanish used for academic talk and talk to the teacher; English for social use

Activity

Imagine you suspect your program is “partial”. What evidence would you want to collect to support that assumption?

Imagine your school decided to conduct a self-evaluation around equity and wanted to gather these pieces of evidence in a systematic way. What methods might you use? How would you determine criteria for making judgments about your findings?

Works Cited


