

## Program Models and the Language of Initial Literacy in Two-Way Immersion Programs

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# Two-Way Immersion Program Characteristics

- ▶ At least 50% of instruction is provided in the partner language (e.g., Spanish) at all elementary grade levels to all students
- ▶ The program extends at least five years, preferably K-12 or PreK-12
- ▶ Both literacy and content are taught in both the partner language and English over the course of the program
- ▶ Instruction is delivered in one language at a time without translation

# TWI Models for Elementary Programs

- ▶ 90/10: The partner language is used most or all of the day in the primary grades and the partner language and English are use equally in the later grades
- ▶ 50/50: The partner language and English are used equally throughout the program

<i>Example of a 90/10 program</i>			<i>Example of a 50/50 program</i>		
	% of instruction in the partner language	% of instruction in English		% of instruction in the partner language	% of instruction in English
K	90	10	K	50	50
1	80	20	1	50	50
2	70	30	2	50	50
3	60	40	3	50	50
4	50	50	4	50	50
5	50	50	5	50	50

Note. Instructional time includes specials classes (art, music, physical education). Some practitioners also include recess and lunch in the calculation of time in the partner language and English.

National Dual Language Consortium, <http://www.dual-language.org>

# Language of Initial Literacy Instruction

- ▶ The language of initial literacy is the language or languages in which students first learn to read and write in the primary grades (K-2)
- ▶ There are three possibilities for the approach to initial literacy instruction
  - All students learn to read in the partner language first
  - All students learn to read in both languages simultaneously
  - All students learn to read in their native language first

# Option 1: Partner Language First



- ▶ All students learn to read in the partner language first
- ▶ Usually happens in the context of a 90/10 or 80/20 program
  - 80-90% of instruction is in the partner language in Grades K-1 or K-2, with the remaining 10-20% of time devoted to English language development
  - Language arts in English formally starts in 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> grade
- ▶ Native English speakers and native speakers of the partner language are integrated for instruction 100% of the day
- ▶ Teachers use flexible grouping and differentiation to meet the needs of native speakers and language learners

# Option 1: Partner Language First



- ▶ Literacy in English is not completely withheld in the first years of the program
  - Preliteracy and literacy activities during 10-20% English time
  - Bilingual books
  - Making cross-linguistic connections
  - Reading in English at home
  - Environmental print within and outside of the school

# Option 1: Partner Language First



## ► Benefits

- Original TWI/dual language model
  - Native language support and development for minority students
  - Immersion in a second language for majority students
- Students have one teacher in early elementary grades
- Strong positive sociolinguistic message about the partner language and culture
- Spanish-specific benefits of this approach
  - Research findings: In 90/10 programs, both English- and Spanish-dominant students have higher Spanish proficiency outcomes at the end of the program than 50/50 students with no detriment to English development in the long run<sup>1</sup>
  - Learning to decode text is easier in Spanish because of transparent or shallow orthography (a consistent correspondence between pronunciation and spelling)

<sup>1</sup>Lindholm-Leary, K. J., & Howard, E. R. (2008). Language development and academic achievement in two-way immersion programs. In T. W. Fortune & D. J. Tedick (Eds.), *Pathways to Multilingualism: Evolving Perspectives on Immersion Education* (pp. 177-200). Oxford, UK: Blackwell.

# Option 1: Partner Language First



## ▶ Drawbacks

- All primary grade teachers must be proficient in both program languages
- Teachers need to meet different and sometimes competing demands of students from the two native language groups
- Can be hard to sell...
  - to parents who speak the partner language who want their kids to learn English
  - to English parents who worry that their kids will “fall behind” their peers in monolingual English programs
- Possibility of lower English standardized test scores in the primary grades (before English language arts is taught formally) compared to students who have more English instruction in their day



# Option 2: Both Languages for Everyone

- ▶ All students learn to read in both languages starting in Kindergarten
- ▶ Usually in the context of a 50/50 program
- ▶ Native English speakers and native speakers of the partner language are integrated for instruction 100% of the day
- ▶ Teachers maintain separation of languages for instruction (no translation)
- ▶ Skills taught in each language are coordinated to maximize cross-linguistic transfer and support learning in content areas
- ▶ Teachers use flexible grouping and differentiation to meet the needs of native speakers and language learners

# Option 2: Both Languages for Everyone

## ▶ Benefits

- Integrity of TWI/dual language model is preserved – all students receive 50% of instruction through both languages at all grade levels and are integrated 100% of the time
- Students learn literacy skills that support the work they do in academic content areas in both languages
- Literacy development in both languages proceeds at a sufficient pace so that language skills are sufficient to meet greater academic demands in upper grades
- Works with either a single teacher teaching both languages or one teacher/one language approach

# Option 2: Both Languages for Everyone

## ▶ Drawbacks

- Lack of a research base on the effects of simultaneous biliteracy instruction; however, veteran programs that use such a model provide empirical evidence of its effectiveness – e.g., Amigos (Cambridge, MA), Key School (Arlington, VA)
- Requires careful coordination between English and partner language teacher for language arts instruction to build on skills previously taught in each language without repeating
- Teachers need to meet different and sometimes competing demands of students from the two native language groups
- Concern about overwhelming students – is this legitimate or a reflection of low expectations for language learners?

# Option 3: Native Language First



- ▶ All students learn to read in their native language first (English or the partner language) before adding literacy in their second language
- ▶ Usually happens in a modified 90/10 or modified 50/50 model
- ▶ Students from the two language groups are separated for instruction for part of the day for the first one to three years of the program
- ▶ Some schools only separate students into native language groups for phonics/skills instruction, others for all of language arts or content areas as well

# Option 3: Native Language First



## ▶ Benefits

- Clear research base supporting native language literacy instruction for English language learners – although this is versus English only, not necessarily versus a simultaneous approach; less research base for native English speakers since this is not a typical concern in US schools
- Easier to target the needs of each language group – in particular, teachers avoid the temptation to water down instruction because of the presence of language learners
- Logistical simplification – one teacher is responsible for all initial literacy instruction for a group of students as opposed to dividing instruction between teachers and languages (although partner teachers should always work to coordinate instruction)

# Option 3: Native Language First



- ▶ Two different possibilities for what this model looks like, each with its own issues

## Option 3a: Native Language First in a 50/50 Context

- ▶ Aside from literacy instruction, students are in integrated groups and classroom instruction is divided equally between English and the partner language (e.g., Spanish)

Sample Kindergarten Schedule (300 minutes in a day)	
Native English Speakers: 90 minutes in English	Native Spanish Speakers: 90 minutes in Spanish
Everyone: 105 minutes in English	
Everyone: 105 minutes in Spanish	

English speakers: 35% Spanish, 65% English

Spanish speakers: 65% Spanish, 35% English

# Option 3a: Native Language First in a 50/50 Context

## ► Issues with Option 3a

- Model fidelity is compromised because native English speakers only receive about one-third of instruction through Spanish in the primary grades, less if specials are taught solely in English
- Pressure on upper-grade teachers
  - Increased academic demand paired with limited Spanish language and literacy ability on the part of native English speakers
  - Pressure to focus on English-language instruction to support students' performance on English achievement tests paired with adding Spanish literacy instruction to the curriculum for native English speakers
- Within the context of a 50/50 program, is the notion of sequential biliteracy development a myth? What happens during content instruction through the L2? How are literacy demands addressed at that time?
- Some schools make up the time by splitting native language instructional time between English literacy and SSL for English speakers and Spanish literacy and ESL for Spanish speakers
  - More of a simultaneous approach to literacy development than native-language-first approach
  - Why not keep kids together so they can learn from each other?



# Option 3b: Native Language First in a 90/10 Context

- ▶ Aside from literacy instruction, students are in integrated groups and most classroom instruction is provided in Spanish

Sample Kindergarten Schedule (300 minutes in a day)	
Native English Speakers: 90 minutes in English	Native Spanish Speakers: 90 minutes in Spanish
Everyone: 30 minutes in English	
Everyone: 180 minutes in Spanish	

English speakers: 60% Spanish, 40% English

Spanish speakers: 90% Spanish, 10% English

# Option 3b: Native Language First in a 90/10 Context

## ▶ Issues with Option 3b

- Model fidelity is preserved, since all students receive at least 50% of instruction through Spanish at all grades
- All primary teachers need to be proficient in both program languages, since everyone would teach integrated groups in Spanish
- English speakers have few opportunities to practice English literacy skills in content areas and are not learning literacy skills to support content work in Spanish

## Other Issues with Separating Students for Initial Literacy (Options 3a and 3b)

- ▶ Difficulty in classifying very young bilingual children as dominant in one language
- ▶ Potential to hold a student back from L2 literacy development
- ▶ When and how will students learn language-specific literacy skills in L2 if ESL/SSL are not provided?
- ▶ Difficult to reinforce new language skills during time when students are integrated if they learned different skills in native language literacy time
- ▶ Scheduling challenges, managing lots of transitions from mixed to native language groups and one language teacher to the other
- ▶ Requires balanced number of students from each language group in each grade
- ▶ Potential erosion of cross-cultural competency goal with students separated for instruction
- ▶ Possibility that students will perceive native language reading groups as a “high” and a “low” group based on the power of English in American society
- ▶ If students receive ESL/SSL in native language groups, they lack the benefit of native language models

# Issues with Changing Program Models

- ▶ For programs that decide to change models or their approach to literacy instruction, several issues must be taken into consideration
  - Language skills of program teachers (some approaches require that all primary grade teachers can teach in both languages)
  - Purchasing additional materials
  - Communicating with parents, staff, and community about the research behind the new model
  - Advocating for assessments in the partner language to count toward district or state accountability requirements
  - Providing additional professional development in differentiating literacy instruction for native speakers and language learners

# Directions for Future Research



- ▶ Is the process of learning to read different for those who learn in two languages at once versus one language followed by the second?
- ▶ Is Option 3b really like a 50/50 model for English speakers and like a 90/10 model for speakers of the partner language, or does the fact of separating students create different outcomes?
  - Different language proficiency outcomes?
  - Different academic outcomes?
- ▶ What are the non-academic consequences of separating students by native language for instruction for part of the day?
- ▶ Are there some native English speakers that require more native language literacy support than others? How much support is the right amount and what form should it take?
- ▶ How should remediation and support for students with special needs be handled in each model?
- ▶ Does the decision about language of initial literacy differ depending on the language pair? Do some language pairs lend themselves better to simultaneous biliteracy development than others?

# Abbreviations



K: Kindergarten

ESL: English as a second language

SSL: Spanish as a second language

L1: First (native) language

L2: Second language

TWI: Two-way immersion (often referred to as dual language)