

Planning micro-level language education reform in new diaspora sites: two-way immersion education in the rural Midwest

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Abstract Discontinuities are often found between top-down language education policies and local language policy enactments, as de facto language policymaking results from stakeholders’ negotiation and interpretation of policy mandates. Teachers occupy a particular role in the execution of language education policies, as they are the “final arbiters” of what takes place in the classroom. Due to the spreading of the Latino Diaspora to non-metropolitan areas, US rural school districts experiencing a flow of English language learners represent salient new contexts for language policy implementation. Since 1973, the state of Illinois has mandated a top-down K-12 Transitional Bilingual Education policy for English language learners, which some school districts have contested by creating two-way immersion programs. Drawing on teacher and administrator personal narratives, this study describes a case of primarily White teachers’ reinterpretation and “correction” of macrolevel language policies and development of a two-way immersion program in rural Illinois. It traces the processes educators experienced when enacting state language policies with limited educational resources and no professional expertise. It also unveils how the implementation of subtractive bilingual education and professional development opportunities shaped teachers’ language ideologies and transformed them into resisters of top-down mandates and enactors of a bottom-up dual language policy. While the interplay of macrolevel language policies, teachers’ individual professional experiences and evolving language ideologies generated implementational and ideological spaces challenging remedial educational approaches,

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programmatic choices were also constrained by social forces, as community members challenged the teachers' choice of bilingual teaching for all children.

Keywords Language policy · Two-way immersion education · Dual language education · Latino education · Latino Diaspora · Teacher professional identities

Introduction

Language policy and planning research traditionally has centered on investigating top-down government endeavors, positing decisional power of language behavior change within processes initiated and regulated by societal macrolevel institutions (Liddicoat and Baldauf 2008). However, discontinuities are found between top-down language education policies and local enactments, since implementation decisions and “real” language policymaking result from negotiation and interpretation of policy mandates by multiple stakeholders (Shohamy 2010). Teachers occupy a particular role in the execution of language education policies, as they are the “final arbiters” of what takes place in the reality of the classroom (Brown 2010; Menken and García 2010). Such realization has called for a reframing of language education policy research to include the investigation of teachers' complex roles as de facto policymakers and their classroom practice as the main locus of policy enactment (Ricento and Hornberger 1996).

In the US, since 1973 the state of Illinois has mandated minimum requirement K-12 Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) regulations. Mirroring the national trend, TBE and other remedial approaches remain the most widespread in Illinois. In the last decade, multiple school districts have challenged the top-down LP by negotiating spaces for enrichment bilingual educational programs in the form of one-way and two-way immersion programs (CAL 2011). Rural school districts experiencing an increase of Spanish-speaking, English language learners, due to the expansion of the Latino Diaspora to non-metropolitan areas, represent a salient new context for the enactment of language education policies.

This paper focuses on the role of personal, educational, and socio-cultural contexts that have influenced the creation and implementation of a two-way immersion program in a rural district. It centers on White teacher transformation into microlevel language policy reformers and the processes involved in their reinterpretation and “correction” of top-down language policies for inclusive, enriching, and equitable educational reform for English language learners and mainstream students. The study asks (1) how educators contested monolingual or remedial bilingual education to promote enrichment bilingual programs and policies, and (2) what contexts fostered and constrained teachers' role as microlevel LP reformers in a rural context. This work adds to the field of microlevel LP studies, investigating how teachers respond to unfitting macrolevel LPs by becoming conscious agents of localized LP reform.

Microlevel perspectives on language policy in education

Traditionally conceptualized as the study of national and supranational policy discourse and actions (Kaplan and Baldauf 1997), language policy (LP) research has been reframed to include the study of microlevel LP within local contexts, as either a localized enactment of a macrolevel policy or a locally conceived and implemented policy (Baldauf 2008). Such reframing is grounded in the observation of the discontinuities between intentions and mandates of macrolevel LPs and the forms they take in the real contexts. Decision-making power is not exclusive to state level institutions, as typical promulgators of LPs, but ultimately lies in the local communities, as final LP enactors (Liddicoat and Baldauf 2008). Therefore, a microlevel research focus should not be limited to investigating the discrepancies between top-down LP and local practices (Du Plessis 2010). It should also examine the multilayered processes characterizing LP enactments, as shaped by multiple stakeholders' interpretation and negotiation of macrolevel policies (Shohamy 2006) and resulting from a fluid interaction of top-down mandates and local decision-making processes. The field of language education policy study has been a central focus of such theoretical reframing, as formal education has been the target of top-down LPs in countries with centralized educational systems and the investigation of the microlevel processes of LP implementation in educational contexts has been scarce (Corson 1999; Menken and García 2010). Microlevel school policies, classroom practices, and teachers' roles as policy enactors should become a central part of language education policy study and ultimately inform macrolevel LPs (Hélot and de Mejía 2008; Ricento and Hornberger 1996).

While a critical approach to LP study (Corson 1999) has been a productive theoretical lens for uncovering education practices disempowering student groups whose language codes/varieties and uses do not conform to established norms, a microlevel LP approach recognizes that educators and their classrooms can become agents and loci of resistance to ideologically hegemonic LPs and practices. Educators can engage in the negotiation of "ideological and implementational spaces" (Hornberger 2002; Hornberger and Johnson 2007) to meet the needs of their microcontexts (Baldauf 2008) and create more equitable multilingual educational practices. The ambiguity of many state LP texts leaves spaces open for multilayered and unpredictable LP interpretations by individual stakeholders at the local level. Johnson and Freeman (2010) studied LP negotiation processes among stakeholders in a Philadelphia school district, where differential interpretation of state LP texts by individuals in different positions of power determined, first, teachers' ideological opening toward an enriching bilingual education program and, then, a closing of implementational possibilities by a school administrator. The study of how power is distributed among local policy makers and how educators can take ownership of the policy processes becomes central in unveiling processes of (un)democratic LP enactment from the bottom.

A microlevel LP framework interconnects with a sociocultural approach to investigating local educational policy implementation and reform, as sociocultural theory (Levinson and Holland 1996; Tharp and Gallimore 1991) views educators as agents of change, whose choices are driven by their personal and professional

histories (Varghese and Stritikus 2005), and define their identities and ideologies individually and collectively (Cummins in Freeman 2004). Hélot and Young's (2006) study of the Didenheim project in France provides a case of teachers' successful resistance of top-down monolingual education policy perpetuating the hegemonic role of French silencing cultural and linguistic diversity in schools. Individual teachers' experience as witnesses of racism against language minority children in school shaped their collective drive toward creating a cultural and language awareness project, as a microlevel LP aimed to rebalance relations of power among the language groups represented in the school.

While teacher-driven LP efforts result from a symbiotic and recursive interaction of personal histories, ideological choices and ever-changing educational realities, their actions and programmatic choices are constrained by wider social contexts (Skilton-Sylvester 2003). Shohamy (2010) highlights how *de facto* LPs have to be analyzed as "situated within social, economic and political contexts" (p. 183). She illustrates three locally created language education policies that resisted centralized monolingual educational mandates in Israel—the inclusion of the teaching of spoken Arabic in Jewish elementary schools, the establishment of bilingual Hebrew-Arabic schools, and the introduction of English language education in preschools. These programs contested centralized language education policies and were implemented at a sociopolitical juncture, when fostering multilingualism in formal education was perceived as fundamental for intergroup harmony and socioeconomic progress. During favorable sociopolitical and economic times, educational spaces can be identified for opposing educational mandates perpetuating the hegemonic role of dominant language groups.

Teacher language education policymaking is conceptualized as resulting from the interaction of a complex set of sociocultural and economic factors, where program implementation is not a byproduct of top-down LPs, but an integral part of policymaking in itself (Sutton and Levinson 2001). Because of the preponderance of ineffective language education policies for minority language children in most countries (Skutnabb-Kangas 2004), investigating what contexts constrain and authorize teachers' contextualized microlevel policy responses and transformations toward equitable and enriching multilingual education for all children becomes primary.

Dual language and two-way immersion as microlevel language education policies

Two-way immersion (TWI) education is designed to rebalance coercive power relations (Cummins 2000) between minority and majority language groups in classrooms and schools. TWI has taken the form of local language education reform from below, initiated by parents, administrators or teachers (Freeman 2004; Mccollum 1994). While some scholars use the term dual language (DL) and TWI instruction interchangeably (e.g., Lindholm-Leary 2001, 2005), DL is increasingly conceived as encompassing four different program models aiming at bilingual enrichment instruction (Cloud et al. 2000; Christian forthcoming; Howard et al.

2003). Developmental bilingual/one-way, two-way, heritage language, and foreign language immersion education employ two languages for content and literacy instruction aiming at high bilingual proficiency, at/above grade level academic performance in both languages, and positive cross-cultural attitudes and behaviors. Programs vary in terms of language allocation across the curriculum—50/50, 80/20 or 90/10—but provide no less than 50% of content-instruction in the minority language.

DL programs are implemented at least for 4–6 years to show success. This requirement is based on large scale studies carried out in Canada and the US, which found that, due to cross-linguistic transfer, the extended use of native languages across the curriculum fosters high academic achievement in both the native and second language (Cummins 1991; Christian et al. 2004; Freeman 1998; Lindholm-Leary 2001; Lindholm-Leary and Block 2010; Palmer 2007; Thomas and Collier 2002). Small scale studies of enrichment bilingual education programs in other regions report similar results. Baetens Beardsmore (1993) called attention to the longevity of European models of bilingual education: the school network of Finnish speakers in Sweden (García et al. 2006), the Catalan and Basque immersion programs in Spain (Artigal 1993), and the Slovene K-13 state-funded school network in Italy (Paciotto 2009) are examples of successful enrichment DL programs employing minority language as the primary medium of instruction.

What distinguishes the TWI models is the integration of native speakers of a majority and a minority language for content and literacy instruction in two languages and the use of pedagogical approaches fostering student cross-cultural cooperation. TWI classrooms require an equal number of speakers from the two language groups to create a balanced interaction of “novices” in the second language and “experts” in the first language modeling each target language (Christian 1996). Where such balance of speakers is unfeasible, the one-third rule at the inception of the program—one third minority language speakers, one third majority language speakers and one third bilinguals—allows for the effective implementation of TWI (Gómez 2000). TWI programs have flourished in the US with a dominance of English–Spanish models in the last decades, with 359 registered programs (CAL 2010). Despite such increase, TWI and other enrichment DL programs are serving a modest number of students (Crawford 2007) and are concentrated in a few states.

Macro-level policy context: Illinois ELL policies

For the first time in US immigration history, Latino and other immigrant groups are settling in non-metropolitan regions in great numbers. The relocation of manufacturing industries such as meat processing plants to rural areas has determined this trend, as they recruit immigrant workers (Dalla and Christiansen 2005; Jensen 2006; Miratfab and McConnell 2008). Because of this “rural industrialization strategy,” the South and Midwest now account for 32 and 27 per cent of all manufacturing employment in the nation (Shavers 2009; Guzmán and Diaz McConnell 2002). As part of this cost-cutting strategy, Latino laborers from Mexico have been actively

recruited to work for low-wage and low-benefit jobs (Longworth 2008; Saenz and Torres 2003). As Latin Americans comprise the majority of immigrants in the country (Singer 2004; Parisi and Lichter 2007), rural schools in many states are experiencing a large influx of Spanish-speaking English language learners (ELLs). In the last decade, Illinois has seen a 125% growth of Latino immigrants in rural areas.

Latino students exhibit the lowest academic attainment level and an alarming high school drop out rate—43.4% for foreign-born Latinos—along with the lowest growth in college degree attainment in the last 20 years (Gándara and Contreras 2009; US Dept. of Education 2011). Segregation, low teacher expectations, ill-equipped and inadequate learning environments and curricular materials, unprepared teachers and family background are observed reasons underlying an endemic low achievement rate of Latinos (Conchas 2001; Horwitz et al. 2009; Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Suárez-Orozco 2001; Waters 1999). Because of the urgency to solve the Latino education crisis, it is important to identify what unique characteristics and challenges rural contexts present for Spanish-speaking ELLs (Johnson and Strange 2007; Quality Counts 2009; Why Rural Matters 2007).

Since 1973, Illinois has mandated a Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) policy, required in schools with 20 or more students speaking a common minority language. TBE must be provided for “a period of 3 years or until such time as [a student] achieves a level of English language skills which will enable him to perform successfully in classes in which instruction is given only in English” (ISBE 2008). When 19 or fewer same language ELLs attend one school, the school will “locally determine” whether to provide a TBE or a Transitional Program of Instruction. This program requires content instruction in the student’s native language to the “extent necessary,” ESL instruction, and instruction in the history and culture of the student’s native land. In 2014, the TBE/TPI language education policy will be extended to Illinois preschools.

While Illinois top-down LP is non-restrictive, allowing for locally-based program modification including DL/TWI education, only 21 such programs were identified in Illinois (CAL 2010). Most ELL programs meet the minimum transitional requirement, reflecting the perspective of language as a problem (Ruíz 1984) pervading the national LP focus and perpetuating the low performance of ELLs (Quality Counts 2009). The inefficiency of ELL education in Illinois is not only due to programmatic issues, but interacts with property tax-based school funding formulas and ethnically and socioeconomically segregated school districts. Both rural and inner-city schools academically fail in comparison to suburban schools typically attended by White middle class students, since the state financially rewards and penalizes residentially segregated racial groups and social classes over others (Beck 2005). While not a panacea for solving the Latino education crisis, DL holds promise for replacing segregated, assimilationist, and academically ineffective education in schools with many Spanish-speaking ELLs.

The sections below describe teachers’ enactment and “correction” of state LPs through the development of a TWI program in rural Illinois. We trace the development of LP agency of primarily White teachers, where “White” refers to the culturally dominant Anglo-American majority which continue to benefit from

institutional and economic privileges and set the norms for what is considered “mainstream” culture in the US (Leonardo 2002).

Local contexts

Rivertown, located in Central Illinois, with a total population of 5,766 (Census 2000), has experienced an influx of Latino immigrants attracted by employment opportunities offered by a meat processing plant (NNIRR 2008). Between 1990 and 2006, Latinos grew by 5000%, impacting local institutions and infrastructures (Miratfab and McConnell 2008). The local schools saw an increase from five native Spanish speakers in 1994 to over 500 in 2009 (see Table 1), comprising 41% of the elementary school population and one-third of the entire school district. Rivertown now shows visible signs of Latino presence and economic entrepreneurship. Like other Midwestern towns populated mainly by Euro-Americans since their founding (McClain 2007), the community has suffered from ethnic conflict. The school then represents a social agency for shaping patterns of socialization among the various communities (Zuñiga et al. 2002).

Research method

This case study explored teachers’ reinterpretation and transformation of state mandated LPs for equitable educational reform for all students in a rural school district. It aimed at reconstructing the history and evolution of LPs in the district with the arrival of ELLs, through teachers’ experiences, evolving perspective, identities, and actions. Qualitative and ethnographic studies of language education policy enactments are essential for capturing the multilayered reality of LP in educational contexts and the processes of “creation, interpretation and appropriation of language policy development” (Johnson 2010, p. 74). Employing an ethnographic approach (Spradley 1979; Wolcott 1999), the data presented were collected

Table 1 Rivertown elementary school demographics (A.Y. 1999–2010)

	Hispanics (%)	LEP (%)	Low income/free lunch (%)
1999	17.6	14.6	63.9
2001	30.0	25.6	67.8
2003	35.7	–	70.2
2005	53.9	31.2	73.8
2007	45.5	43.7	79.2
2009	40.7	40.7	77.2
2010	46.3	35.4	80.5

Source: Illinois State Board of Education

in 2008–2010 through in-depth interviews eliciting personal narratives (Riessman 2003) from 17 TWI teachers, two Title I reading instructors, five mainstream teachers and six administrators. In 2008, we carried out 20 hours a week of classroom participant observation and spent 3 months as aides in the 2nd grade classrooms for an average of four times a week. We conducted participant observations in school-wide contexts, at TWI faculty and parents meetings and family events. Participant observation was crucial to fine-tune interview questions and to contextualize the interview data. On-going interactions in the school district teaching and researching for the last decade allowed us an entry in the classrooms and a relationship of trust with teachers and administrators. We interviewed 25 Spanish-speaking Latino parents and four White parents to substantiate teachers' perceptions of parental support of the TWI program.

The six teachers who were instrumental in the creation of the TWI since the beginning phases were formally interviewed at least twice for 60–90 min and engaged in informal interviews on a weekly basis during the years 2008–2010. These teachers recalled the arrival of the first immigrant children and program changes. TWI teachers who had been teaching in the program for shorter amounts of time were interviewed at least once. They were not the primary source of historical information, but provided personal narratives about professional choices, program model characteristics and challenges, instructional approaches, and student attrition. Because the TWI program represented a strand in the school and TWI teachers often referred to the importance of non-TWI teachers' support in the school, six mainstream teachers who had taught in the school for over a decade were interviewed. Because they had the opportunity but elected not to teach ELLs, their interviews allowed for a sharper analysis/interpretation of TWI founding teachers' professional transformations.

A personal narrative analysis framework (Riessman 2003) was employed to analyze and interpret the interview data. Personal narratives illuminate identity changes spurred by salient events and “turning points” in individuals' life experiences and incorporate individual, collective, cultural and social perspectives in unique ways. Autobiographical narratives provide a vantage point for “accessing motivation, emotion, imagination, subjectivity, and action in ways less available to other sources” (Laslett 1999, p. 392). Because personal narratives are inherently shaped by temporality, they provide ways to comprehend history. Here, personal narratives were analyzed by identifying meaning-making segments (Riessman 2001) in the description of past experiences and events relative to LPs and program shifts, highlighting personal and collective motives and perspectives. We identified and analyzed segments revealing tensions between educational reality and mandated language policies, evolving language education ideologies, professional challenges and shifts. We compared them across interviews to look for patterns on how individual experiences and collective decisions were reciprocally shaped. Meaningful narrative fragments within individual interviews were also analyzed for teacher subjectivity, positionality, and identity construction in relation to salient events and collective actions. While not generalizable, this case study presents in close detail an innovating and telling case.

Becoming an ELL teacher in a rural district

From mainstream to ELL teacher

Nationally, ELL education has been characterized by a shortage of English as a Second Language (ESL) and Bilingual Education (BE) licensed teachers (Brooks et al. 2010) and by teachers with inadequate professional knowledge to serve ELLs effectively (Wong-Fillmore and Snow 2002). Due their geographic isolation, rural school districts present extra layers of difficulty for locating and retaining qualified ELL teachers (Arnold et al. 2005). In 1994, Rivertown school administrators resorted to improvised interpreters to cope with the first Spanish-speaking elementary students, as a former principal recounted,

I had my grandchildren at the park one day and I saw this gentleman who had about four little kids and he was speaking Spanish to them ... Pretty soon he walked over to where I was sitting and he started speaking to me in English ... I said, 'do you have a job?' and he said, 'no, we just moved here from the Chicago area and I'm unemployed.' I said, 'Monday you have a job. Come to our school.' So he worked with our five students in their language on basic concepts. ... We were just desperate, so we engaged parents to help us in the classroom, we would take any volunteer, any person who said they spoke Spanish.

During 1994–1997, fewer than 20 children speaking a minority language were present in each schools and the district provided interpreters in the classrooms along with a “floating” ESL teacher serving all ELLs in the district. Interpreters became classroom aides providing minority language instructional support, while the ESL teacher pulled out individual or groups of ELLs for an hour a day. In 1997–1998, the number of Spanish-speaking ELLs increased to 60 students and warranted the creation of the state-mandated transitional bilingual education (TBE) program.

As common in New Latino Diaspora sites (Gibson 2002), administrators asked mainstream teachers with no ELL teaching experiences to serve in the K-5 TBE program. When three Spanish-speaking teachers with no ELL teaching qualifications were hired to provide Spanish content instruction, this was made inconsistent by placing children with Latino surnames in the same classrooms regardless of their first language. Even when only Spanish-speaking ELLs were included in self-contained TBE classrooms, instruction in the two languages in instruction was not consistently provides as a Spanish-speaking and an English-speaking teacher were assigned to the same grade; a bilingual teacher was assigned to one classroom supported by a Spanish-speaking aide; and one English-speaking teacher was paired to Spanish-speaking aides to foster comprehensible input and acquisition of content knowledge. The uneven availability of bilingual instructional materials across grade levels added to the difficulty of including Spanish content instruction.

Few mainstream classroom teachers were willing to stay in the TBE program. The state mandated a six-course ESL/BE endorsement for teaching ELLs and some teachers refused to take the time to become qualified, while others were discouraged by the challenges of the new instructional reality. One teacher was asked to take an

ESL teaching position after 20 years in the mainstream classroom. The instructional demands of the new position were intensified by students and parents cultural differences, which she perceived as cultural borders (Erickson 2004). The lack of specific curricular guidance and the pressure of state supervisors to become qualified wore her out. Frustrated, she returned to her previous career. Her narrative revealed signs of diversity-related burnout (Tatar and Horenczyk 2003) and resistance to making changes to meet the needs of diverse children and highlighted the difficulties teachers had to face to meet state requirements, when they were offered limited resources and no on-site support. Her experience raised the question of what prompted other teachers in the same contingencies to embrace ELL teaching.

Developing purpose and vision

Personal narratives of TBE teachers and TWI founders reveal profiles of primarily White teachers who “fell” into those positions from different teaching backgrounds. Brian, a former Peace Corps Volunteer in Ecuador, was hired as a Spanish-speaking teacher in 1997 with an educational background in environmental education. After teaching in the district for a few years, Carl was asked to become a TBE teacher since he had minored in Spanish. Working in the migrant education program one summer, he was inspired to become a TBE teacher. Sandra had been teaching in the Rivertown School District for 20 years. Her first degree was in horticulture. After obtaining a teaching certificate, she accepted a 6th grade teaching position in Rivertown. She became an ELL teacher after teaching Latino children in the summer migrant program in 1998. Luz was the only Latino and native Spanish speaker. She was hired in 1997 as a TBE kindergarten teacher with Spanish as a foreign language teaching credentials. Sarah, a long-time mainstream kindergarten teacher in the district and a member of a prominent family in Rivertown became a TBE kindergarten teacher after interacting with Luz’s classroom in an effort to “mix” White and Latino kindergarteners.

These teachers represent those who “stuck it out,” in spite of coming from mainstream teaching experiences and facing a difficult time shifting to a bilingual education context, as they were not provided methodological guidance and curricular materials in either English or Spanish. As Brian recalled,

Being a first-year teacher and not having the background of the methods courses ... I was just kind of left to do whatever I could, teach the current curriculum, only make it comprehensible... We were making [the Spanish curriculum] up as we went. There were no real resources. We had some Spanish storybooks, but that was about it.

For Brian and Carl, instructing in their second language was an additional hardship and it tested their sense of cultural adequacy. What emerged as a common thread was that the teaching difficulties were balanced by a renewed sense of purpose as educators. When Sandra and Carl were offered positions in the federally funded summer migrant program for Latino students in Rivertown, they felt a “calling” to stay with this group of children. They experienced something new and

exciting; they were inspired by the children's enthusiasm for learning, parents' dedication, and exemplary classroom behavior. Sandra remembered,

That was the summer I started. I absolutely fell in love with second grade. ... one thing was [Latino] parents' dedication to education. ... [Latino children] never missed school, never. Their behavior was always excellent. They wanted to learn.

Like her colleagues, she viewed cultural and linguistic challenges as exciting. She saw potential in the children, eagerness to learn and an immediate impact of her teaching. These factors represented a turning point in her career and motivated her to stay in the new position. As Sandra underlined,

Every day was a challenge... It wasn't only the alphabet and the reading of English and everything. I just liked the challenge of telling them everything... reading stories to them and things that our kids take for granted ... the kids were such good students. They just respected the teachers.

The children's eagerness to learn motivated these teachers to become effective ELL teachers. They all earned the ESL/BE credentials, traveled to Mexico to understand their students' and parents' cultural background, attended professional development opportunities and became the advocates for these children in the school. As they found a renewed individual sense of purpose and vision to serve ELLs, their experiences in the classroom and in professional development helped them shape an ideological basis for transforming the local education system toward an equitable LP.

From individual to collective transformation

After years of teaching in TBE self-contained classrooms, teachers developed a dissatisfaction toward the program. Consistent with longitudinal studies of the effectiveness of early exit TBE (Thomas and Collier 2002), Rivertown teachers observed that the quick transition to English-only classrooms set up their students for failure in higher grades. Brian noted, "we were seeing in the upper grades their academic progress falling off ... it fell precipitously down. Once they got into middle school, they were struggling." According to Sandra, the transition to English-only classrooms terminated needed ELL support services.

A concern emerging from the TBE program was the ethnic segregation between Latino and non-Latino children, confirming how TBE programs can "heighten the social inequities and subconsciously maintain the status quo in majority-minority relations" (Collier 1995, p. 6). Sarah recalled that,

There were four [kindergarten] classrooms and two were native Spanish speakers and two were native English speakers. I remember we were concerned because at recess and lunch they were segregated ... So we started wanting to mix them.

The scenario was similar in the upper grades. The program divided children according to native language and ethnicity and divided teachers as well. Sandra

recalled that, “We were so away from everyone else. ... That’s why TBE was so bad. There was no interaction. It was basically black and white on the playground.” During the TBE period, she was feeling as if she was in the “trenches,” defending herself and the children from the stigma of not being a teacher of a “regular” classroom. She had shifted from being a successful mainstream teacher to the “other side.” She recalled that, “being in TBE 2 years, I felt ostracized. I knew my students felt ostracized, separated from everyone else, looked down upon, regardless of their academic work.” Sarah explained,

I remember the TBE classroom, how negative it was when you were out of the classroom because other teachers were convinced you were teaching future gang members. ... The lunchroom lady just hated your class. ... I would eat with my class every day so at least she would be respectful to them.

Latino student isolation and discrimination confirmed the already known negative impact of TBE (Lee and Anderson 2009; McKown and Weinstein 2007). While most of the TBE teachers had started a conscious process of self-transformation becoming advocates of ELLs, their direct experience of the failure of TBE pressed them to become agents of change toward a collective and institutional transformation, positioning themselves as “the centerpiece of educational change” (Datnow et al. 2002, p. 71).

From macro to micro language education planning

Executing the “moral imperative”

During the 7 years of TBE implementation, TBE teachers were engaged in studying bilingual development theories and BE models through professional development, which shaped their collective ideological perspectives toward reforming TBE. As Brian explained, “We knew that TBE was an inferior way of going about teaching ELLs.” With the support and initiative of a principal, they decided to reform the local school LP from the bottom. They met on a regular basis to discuss the impact of the TBE and TWI models emerged as promising for overcoming the academically, linguistically and socially subtractive TBE: it offered the benefit of desegregating the two ethnic groups, while fostering high biliterate academic development for both groups.

Sandra recalled the faculty meetings held to discuss TWI planning, and attending TWI workshops. La Cosecha conference school visits were a watershed, which prompted Luz and Sarah to start “dabbling in dual language.” They mixed Spanish and English-speaking kindergarteners daily for 45 min, exposing all children to Spanish instruction. As they examined various program models, they formed the idea that a 50–50 model would be more acceptable for the community of White parents, because of the lowest amount of Spanish instruction. The teachers presented the idea of TWI to the school board, but no commitment emerged until 2004 when a new superintendent was hired. He recalled his hesitation to support it,

DL meant eliminating TBE and going to a 50–50 [Spanish–English] model of instruction.... You can imagine my first thought. How would a predominately White, elderly, and rural community accept this change? Additionally ... would you want one of your first decisions as a new administrator to be controversial?

In a town with a long history of intolerance toward minorities (Miratfab and McConnell 2008) and ethnic tensions since Latino arrival, teachers feared the refusal of White parents to enroll their children in a program academically equating the immigrant language to English. How could they convince White parents and the school board that this program was going to benefit their children?

The lack of support by the administration and the school board did not prevent TBE teachers from initiating the shift from TBE to TWI. As the Kindergarten principal recalled, “Over the summer we decided very quickly ... We just jumped, because we decided if we didn’t jump, it probably wasn’t ever going to happen.” However, the fear of White parents’ negative reaction to TWI had a crucial effect on the initial implementation of the program. Because teachers were fearful of cultivating parental support as a condition to implementing Spanish integrated instruction—a fundamental step for TWI effectiveness (Cloud et al. 2000)—Spanish instruction was introduced incrementally, hoping to slowly reach a 50/50 model while gaining White parents’ support. In the first year, Spanish was included in Kindergarten for 30 min daily; the following year, 60 min of Spanish instruction was added daily for all first graders. Brian recalled,

The first year in first grade, the program had two strands of DL. Each strand had one teacher who taught in English, one teacher who taught in Spanish. ... There was a lot of hesitation by the administration to integrate those kids: you had to have an English classroom and a Spanish classroom. Your language arts [were] taught in your native language, and midway through the day, [English and Spanish-speaking] kids were integrated so then they had DL.

Teachers realized that this was not “real” TWI, but they were laying the basis for future full implementation. Paradoxically, teachers’ “moral imperative” to end segregation through TWI for all children was so compelling that the initial introduction of Spanish instruction was not provided as an option—as state LP dictated—but became part of the regular curriculum for kindergarteners and first graders. The lack of parental agreement about this curriculum change had the effect of almost terminating the program. As Luz remembered, White parents initially accepted what they perceived as exposure to oral Spanish in kindergarten, “I think they thought of it as a social language ... [they thought] ‘they’re learning, they’re interacting’.” When they realized that Spanish was employed for content teaching, they wanted their children out (Table 2). In spring of 2005, in response to the negative reaction of the White parents, the school board determined that the program had to be optional and that, as the TWI director remembered, “no child would be ‘forced’ to learn Spanish.”

Table 2 Chronology of programs in Rivertown

Years	Program model	Classroom configuration	Objectives
1994–1997	TPI (state-mandated)	ESL pull-out and L1 interpreters	Subtractive
1997–2004	TBE (state-mandated) for all ELLs	Self-contained bilingual classrooms	Subtractive (early exit, three years of decreasing L1 instruction)
2004–2011	50/50 TWI (FLAP grant 2005–2008)	Minority and majority language speakers in same classrooms	Additive/enrichment (50% of L1 instruction; 50% of L2 instruction)

Overcoming community resistance

The acceptance of the program by the English-speaking community was one of greatest challenges that TWI staff faced. Most of the teachers supporting the program, as White members of Rivertown community, had a potentially privileged negotiating voice for “selling” their program choice. However, their initial limited knowledge of the workings of TWI and second language acquisition, compounded by the strong anti-bilingual education misconceptions and constant outside pressures questioning the use of Spanish instruction weakened their voices and their ability to implement a true 50/50 model since program inception. A teacher wrote in a class paper that the uneven language allocation of the TWI was due to the difficulty of finding available language resources for specialties, but also to the sociocultural context surrounding the program, “We are probably not truly [50/50] Dual Language, but we have to do what our community will allow. Many of our English-speaking parents might pull their children from the program if we pushed too much Spanish.”

A turning point in the implementation of a 50/50 program came with the hiring of a new BE director who secured a 3-year, federally funded Foreign Language Acquisition Program (FLAP) grant in 2005, permitting the transformation of the initial program into a full-fledge enrichment TWI program. The director noted that, “Our hope was that the program would be perceived as an enrichment program, and would help people in the community take a more positive view of learning in Spanish, and provide an additive bilingual environment for heritage language speakers.” Backed up by legitimization of the federal grant, the superintendent decided to “jump” and, as he recalled, after the initial missteps, to “sell the Board of Education and the community on the dual language 50/50 idea.”

The approval of the school board was secured through informational sessions, testimonies of children and teachers about the benefits of bilingualism and biliteracy for both groups of children. During the years 2005–2008, the FLAP grant resources and a stronger leadership aided in raising the profile of the program. On year three of the grant in 2007–2008, TWI kindergarten enrollment amounted to 40 English dominant and 43 Spanish dominant students and a total of 300 students in K-5 grades. White parents now were deliberately enrolling their children in the TWI and recognized the program as beneficial for future job opportunities, for widening their

cultural and communicative horizons, as some mothers expressed in their interviews (Table 3). The TWI director still highlighted the challenges of retaining English dominant children, while noting program achievements:

While the program still experiences drop-out of non-Latino English speakers around 4th grade, such results are still remarkable and show an acceptance of the role of bilingualism and biculturalism as a positive force in children’s educational experience.

The FLAP grant provided outside legitimization and provided clear objectives and resources to the teachers, as a teacher underlined:

The FLAP grant has changed everything. [During] the TBE We went from TBE to trying to have our own DL program with no true guidance.... When we got the FLAP grant we seemed to have more directives, more purpose, we were more focused on what our goals were.

The program started taking the shape of a 50/50 TWI model and started showing positive academic outcomes. TWI students generally performed at the same level or better than children in English-only classrooms and showed comparable or greater growth than children in English-only classrooms. DIBELS provided some evidence of this (Table 4), while the 2008–2009 school reports for the state explained that the TWI contributed to better Illinois Standard Achievement Test scores, with students in 4th grade and 5th grade meeting/exceeding state standards at higher levels than English-only classrooms.

According to Latino parents, the program was fulfilling its promises. A former Latino aide in the district, now a pre-service BE teacher and mother of two children who respectively attended TBE and TWI, provided a comparative perspective on

Table 3 Enrollment at Rivertown elementary (A.Y. 2008–2009)

	TWI Program	English-only program	Total
Kinder	82	39	121
	68%	32%	
1st	65	14	79
	82%	18%	
2nd	55	35	90
	61%	39%	
3rd	28	41	69
	41%	59%	
4th	35	30	65
	54%	46%	
5th	45	80	125
	36%	64%	
Total	228	239	467
	48%	52%	

Table 4 Dynamic indicators of basic early literacy skills (DIBELS) mean test scores: TWI and English-only 4th graders (A.Y. 2008–2009)

4th grade	TWI English	English-only classrooms
ORF fall average	104.17	85.52
ORF winter average	132.33	106.38
RTF fall average	22	24.05
RTF winter average	43	40.28

ORF Oral reading fluency and retell fluency, *RTF* retell fluency

the two programs. She reflected on the impact of the shift from TBE to TWI through the experiences of her children—a daughter who attended the TBE program and a son attending the TWI 6th grade—noting difference of school climate, academics and native language development. She felt that the TWI allowed her younger son to develop his first language and English at grade level. She attributed her daughter’s struggle in high school and low Spanish reading and oral comprehension and vocabulary to the remedial nature of TBE. She also referred to the different school climates her children experienced, “there used to be a lot of fighting going on even when [my daughter] was in 6th grade, 7th grade...but now...she doesn’t see that much of a friction in those grades...I think the integration of the dual language program has helped a lot.” While biliteracy and development of bilingualism for both ELLs and non-ELLs were primary objectives, social harmony still emerged as the strongest “moral imperative” of the TWI teachers. As Sarah expressed, “[There is] a huge difference you see in these kids just 4 years later. To them, it doesn’t make sense, segregation.”

While these data are not sufficient to fully assess the full impact of TWI, they suggest improvement of social interaction and academic and bilingual achievement. Teachers in Beardstown were no longer dreaming of transforming their classroom and the school. They knew they had planted a seed of social acceptance in the classroom through a profound language education policy shift and now hoped that its effects would trickle down to the wider community.

Change and reform as a way of life

Freeman (2004) observed that TWI teachers “are regularly required to explain what they are doing and why” (p. 279). Rivertown TWI teachers’ instructional competence and approach faced constant questioning by non-TWI teachers and parents. Often, struggling TWI learners were transitioned to English-only classrooms, and mainstream teachers theorized that instruction in two languages exacerbated students’ learning difficulties. Freeman (2004) remarked that, paradoxically, such constant outside questioning renders TWI teachers more motivated and cohesive in producing evidence of program effectiveness. Luz stressed how TWI implementation had fostered a strong bond among her colleagues,

We plan together, we have meetings, we have gone to Dual-U [classes], we’ve gone to bilingual conferences. A lot of us have started from the beginning of

TBE, so we have known where we come from and where we are going and how much better it is. ... we are bonded, we're friends ... We take [reciprocal] criticism as growth.

The urgency to reform TBE from the bottom necessitated the creation of a culture of constructive and sustained collaboration about each programmatic aspect. Collaboration was enhanced by the FLAP grant, which provided common planning times, resources to create school-wide initiatives promoting appreciation of children diversity, and participation in professional development as a team. Luz talked about program improvement as a process of on-going collective reflection and decision-making,

We're still in a process because when we go back we think we might upset the fruit basket again and figure things out in a different model... So it has been a growing process, a learning process ... Little by little, we're getting there.

Teachers realized that they were not only working for the individual child to succeed, but also to make the whole program successful. This sense of responsibility was expressed by a commitment to continuous individual instructional improvement and innovation. They realized that they had much to learn to implement a TWI program. As a veteran teacher expressed,

I feel like I'm learning every day, wanting to change every day and just improve it. I guess just continue to get education and go with that. ... There are a lot of good ideas I got [from professional development] ... I've been teaching for so long that I sometimes automatically do those things that I've always... But I need to go back. There is a lot more I can do with these kids that the kids respond to... that is my challenge.

By shifting their careers becoming central agents of language education policy creation and implementation, TWI teachers made a commitment to be in the "business of constant change and innovation" (Fullan 1993, p. 13).

In 2010, Rivertown TWI was in its eighth year of implementation. The program was struggling to retain White children in the 6–8th grades and, now without grant monies, to provide continuous teacher professional development. However, an increasing number of credentialed ELL Latino Spanish-speaking teachers, many former teacher aides in the TBE program, represented a "second generation" of TWI teachers. How their credentials and their Latino cultural heritage and native Spanish language background will enhance and transform the program are questions to be explored. The work of the White pioneering teachers paved the road for Latino Spanish-speaking teachers to become integral parts of the education of Latino and White children, promising to provide more balanced cultural and linguistic role models for TWI children and adding Latino voices to localized LP leadership.

Conclusion

The evolution of Rivertown language education policy highlights the dynamic interaction of macro and microlevel LPs in a rural school district experiencing

unexpected immigration flows. The development of teacher agency in LP originated from an individual and genuine sense of care toward newly arrived ELL students. Teachers' personal interaction with ELLs produced a renewed sense of professional purpose and motivation that determined their radical professional shift. It was a personal disposition of a few teachers to determine their first steps toward serving ELLs in a responsive manner. Macrolevel policies mediated the teachers' subsequent classroom experiences, when novice ELL teachers were pressed by state laws to implement programs specifically addressing ELLs' needs and the importance of minority language as instructional resource in a transitional/remedial perspective. The teachers' LP reforming action ultimately resulted from the impact of macrolevel minimum requirement laws on the local school reality. The observed fallacies of TBE, ELL teachers' exposure to enrichment BE literature in state mandated professional development, and their sense of justice for all children, made them appropriate the mandated law in an unpredictable way (Johnson and Freeman 2010). While TBE created implementational spaces, these undoubtedly became "wedges to pry open ideological ones" (Hornberger 2002), which fostered corrective and locally designed implementational spaces based on social needs and realities of the students. While this is a hopeful process of transformation from below, valuable for similar contexts, these teachers' struggles raise questions about how to facilitate the development of LP agency from the bottom in a more efficient way.

Because of the lack of financial resources and ELL education knowledge, and geographic isolation, rural districts have to "adapt" their preexistent human resources to fit the needs of changing demographic contexts. In Rivertown, mainstream educators struggled through phases of instructional inefficiency and error and trial with little guidance, but were motivated to become effective educators by their personal dedication toward ELLs. With the spread of the New Latino Diaspora to rural regions, implementation of efficient LPs for language minority children cannot rest on the shoulders of a few dedicated teachers. Teaching effectiveness, positive attitudes, sense of responsibility and mission toward language minority children need to be cultivated in every teacher and teacher candidate. Teacher education institutions should require the development of "knowledge, skills and dispositions" (Gonzalez and Darling-Hammond 1997), emphasizing the study and practice of LP for ELLs to all teacher candidates, which is still a rare occurrence.

While Illinois' ELL top-down education regulations are non-restrictive, the state offers little to no incentive for developing enriching dual language education. The lack of preparation of most teachers and administrators, state financial support for enrichment LP implementation, and bilingual education teachers in isolated immigration gateways make the potential transition from minimum requirement to equitable LPs rare or painstaking, with many odds to fight. Even where the administrator and teacher ideological base might be conducive to need-based LP transformation from the bottom, the current socioeconomic climate and underfunding of rural districts, whose budgets are hampered by a property tax-based formula, makes attracting credentialed teachers from outside and providing needed professional development arduous. While top-down regulations might "pry open...

ideological ones” (Hornberger and Johnson 2007), fostering more efficient and equitable LPs, socioeconomic variables might impede their implementation.

While immigration to non-metropolitan areas has been characterized by Spanish-speaking Latinos, Rivertown and other rural communities are experiencing a recent diversification of immigrants. Reacting to restrictive and punitive immigration policies for undocumented Latinos, manufacturing plants in non-metropolitan areas are diversifying their workforce, attracting families with refugee status and work visas. Consequently, for example, laborers from Francophone Africa have been steadily flowing into Rivertown school system in the last 2 years, bringing new educational challenges and possibilities. As rural areas have become growing centers of economic development and multilingual/cultural microcosms, they can no longer be ignored. Resources need to be allocated to deal with multilingual educational realities and provide new models of multilingual instruction. TWI education represents a promising enrichment dual language education policy, but “various modes of interplay” (Hélot and de Mejía 2008, p. 5) must be envisaged to respond to the changing demographics in an effort to create balanced power relations between minority and majority language groups in school settings.

Finally, while the cultural and linguistic discontinuities between White teachers and minority children are often viewed as detracting for ELLs (Valenzuela 1999), in a rural reality where finding educators mirroring children’s demographic characteristics is difficult, middle-class White teachers and administrators with little or no initial experience in minority language education constitute a powerful and necessary force toward equitable and enriching language education policies fighting the marginalization of immigrant children. In educational contexts where ELL education presents an uncharted territory for school districts and wider community, White educators can and should appropriate, reinterpret and correct remedial macrolevel LPs for the benefit of all students.

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