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DEVELOPING SPANISH IN DUAL LANGUAGE PROGRAMS

Preschool through twelfth grade

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Introduction

Dual language programs have increased dramatically in popularity in the U.S. since the late 1980s due to a large number of studies demonstrating their success for Latino and other students. Dual language programs integrate native Spanish speakers (typically those who enter school not fluent in English – English Learners) with native English speakers for instruction through both languages. The stated goals of these programs are bilingualism, biliteracy, and academic achievement.

This chapter examines research and practices in Spanish/English dual language programs and the language, academic, and attitudinal outcomes for Latino students and their families. Specifically, it provides:

1) A brief definition of dual language programs;
2) A variety of critical issues and topics that impact Spanish language proficiency and educational success for Latino students in dual language programs;
3) Data on the extent to which Latinos students in dual language programs develop bilingual proficiency and academic achievement in two languages compared to their Latino peers in English mainstream programs;
4) Descriptions of the attitudes that Latino children and their parents hold toward bilingualism and dual language experiences; and
5) Recommendations for practice and future research directions in dual language programs serving Latino students and families.

Numerous reports in the U.S. confirm that Latino students, whether native English or Spanish speaking, are at risk for underachievement and school drop out (e.g., Forum for Education & Democracy, 2008; President’s Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Latino Americans, 2003; Reardon & Galindo, 2009; Tienda, 2009). However, there has been insufficient attention devoted to the question of effective educational programs for Latino students from different demographic backgrounds. Most research has focused on immigrant children, especially those who enter school as English learners (ELs). As a group, English-speaking
Latinos are usually excluded from educational research because, as English speakers, they are not considered to be at risk. However, they are included in the at-risk group when the focus is on Latinos in general because many English speakers in this group are found to be at risk for under achievement and school drop-out (Forum for Education & Democracy, 2008; Tienda, 2009). What is rare are studies that examine Spanish proficiency among Latino students. This chapter will remedy that need by focusing on Spanish and bilingual proficiency as well as attitudes toward bilingualism and biculturalism for different subgroups of Latino students in dual language programs. These students differ in language background (native English vs. native Spanish speaking), English language proficiency (fluent/not fluent in English), and social class.

**Introduction to dual language education**

Dual language (DL) is an umbrella term that refers to programs that provide instruction through two languages at the elementary level. In all programs, students are required to learn English and the non-English language (which in this chapter refers to Spanish), learn the same district and state standards, and be assessed using the same state standards. Two major types of DL programs that promote bilingualism are briefly described below.

- **Developmental bilingual education** – also sometimes referred to as maintenance or late exit bilingual programs. This form of DL education, specifically designed for native Spanish speakers (NSS), uses Spanish and English for literacy and academic instruction beginning in kindergarten and continuing through as many grades as the school district will support. There are some developmental bilingual programs at the preschool level as well.

- **Two-way immersion education** – these programs integrate native Spanish speakers (NSS) and native English speakers (NES) in the same classroom for academic instruction through both Spanish and English. The NES include students of different ethnic backgrounds, including Latino. In some programs, one-third of students are NES, one-third are Spanish/English bilinguals, and one third are NSS/EL.

In dual language programs, Spanish is used for a significant portion (from 50% to 90%) of the students’ instructional day. In 90:10 programs, students spend 90% of their day instructed in Spanish, learning content (math, social studies) and literacy in Spanish, and they spend 10% of their day in English, developing oral academic language. However, despite the name, it is only in kindergarten and first grade that 90% of instruction occurs in Spanish; in each grade after that, more English is added until the children are spending half their day in English and half their day in Spanish, usually by grade 4. In 50:50 programs, students spend half their instructional day in English and half in Spanish across all grade levels. While DL programs are most common at the K-5 grade levels, a few districts offer articulated K-8 or K-12 programs so that students can continue to study Spanish in a DL program in middle and high school. In those DL programs, students take one class of language and another one or two content courses in Spanish. Unfortunately, even in middle and high schools that offer additional coursework for DL students, there is little articulation across the grade levels, especially from elementary to secondary.

The next sections review research on English learning and overall academic achievement in dual language programs, as well as the importance of developing bilingual (and not just English) abilities.
Spanish in dual language programs

English acquisition and overall achievement in DL programs

Over 30 years of research in the U.S. has consistently demonstrated that NSS and NES both benefit from dual language programs (for reviews, see Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders, & Christian, 2006; Lindholm-Leary, 2016a; Lindholm-Leary & Howard, 2008; National Academy of Sciences, 2017). Scientifically based research and evaluation studies are consistent in showing that students in both 90:10 and 50:50 programs in public and charter schools who received extended instruction through both languages, at least through elementary school, equaled or surpassed the achievement levels of their peers who were educated in English-only mainstream classrooms (Genesee & Lindholm-Leary, 2013; Lindholm-Leary & Genesee, 2010; Lindholm-Leary & Howard, 2008; National Academy of Sciences, 2017; Steele et al., 2017).

Collier and Thomas (2017) reported on the achievement of EL students in various types of educational programs. They showed that, consistent with other research (for a review, see Lindholm-Leary, 2016a), students in two-way dual language and late-exit developmental bilingual programs achieve at higher levels than students in early exit and ESL programs. However, in the early grades, there is little difference in their achievement, but by late elementary through secondary grades, students in dual language perform at higher levels and close the achievement gap with native English speaker norms.

These results were found with a variety of student outcomes – standardized achievement tests, course grades, school attendance and dropout rates, and student attitudes – as well as in different geographic locations; richer, middle class, and poorer communities; schools in rural, urban, inner city, and suburban areas; students from different ethnic and language backgrounds; and students with various disabilities. There are only a few studies of Latino NES in two-way programs, but they also show that these students are successful in two-way programs (e.g., Lindholm-Leary, 2001, 2014; Lindholm-Leary & Block, 2010; Lindholm-Leary & Hernández, 2011).

While this chapter focuses on Spanish language development, it is important to make a few comments about our knowledge of English language development of NSS students in DL programs. First, there is a surprising scarcity of empirical research on the English language development of either NSS or NES students in DL programs other than that derived from various language proficiency measures; this is particularly true of research on the acquisition and use of specific linguistic structures (e.g., verbs, pronouns, causal connectors) and sociolinguistic skills. Second, there is little research on how oral language proficiency is related to Latino students’ overall academic success, although we know that it is (Genesee et al., 2006). Third, NSS in DL programs are as or more likely to develop high levels of proficiency in English compared to their peers in English mainstream programs, despite the considerable difference in time spent in instruction through English. Below, we will examine Spanish language development and the relationships between Spanish and English language development, and the implications of this bilingualism on Latino children’s academic success.

The importance of bilingualism for academic success

The assumption of many educators is that NSS/ELs need only to develop English proficiency in order to achieve at higher levels; they do not even consider Spanish proficiency. It is true that academic oral English proficiency correlates positively with English reading achievement (Genesee et al., 2006; Lindholm-Leary 2001, 2005, 2016a; Lindholm-Leary & Howard, 2008; Mancilla-Martínez, this volume; National Academy of Sciences, 2017). However, it is important
to note two things. First, oral Spanish proficiency is associated with Spanish reading achievement (Genesee et al., 2006; Lindholm-Leary 2001, 2005, 2016a, 2017; Lindholm-Leary & Hernández, 2011; Lindholm-Leary & Howard, 2008). Second, the stronger students’ Spanish and English, the stronger their academic achievement: both in DL programs and in other educational contexts, studies have shown that more balanced bilingual Latino students tend to have higher achievement scores, grade point averages, and educational expectations than their English-dominant or Spanish-dominant Latino peers (e.g., Cazabon, Nicoladis, & Lambert, 1998; de Jong & Bearse, 2011; Genesee et al., 2006; Lindholm-Leary, 2016a; Lindholm & Aclan, 1991; Lindholm-Leary & Hernández, 2011). This is an important finding because it demonstrates that oral English proficiency is necessary, but not sufficient, for students to excel scholastically; that is, bilingual proficiency is more likely to enable school success (Collins et al., 2011).

In another study, Lindholm-Leary and Hernández (2011) reported on longitudinal data with three groups of grades 4–8 Latino students in DL programs:

1. NES Bilingual: Native English speakers who were bilingual;
2. NSS Bilingual: Native Spanish speakers who were previously English learners but currently English proficient;
3. NSS ELs: Native Spanish speakers who were still learning English.

The authors found that the three groups varied significantly in Spanish language proficiency and in achievement as measured in Spanish and English. Specifically, NSS Bilinguals were the most Spanish proficient – surprisingly, more than the NSS ELs – and the most bilingual, according to teacher ratings (FLOSEM). They also achieved at significantly higher levels in reading in Spanish and English, and they even closed the achievement gap with native English speakers in English mainstream programs. Further, there were strong relationships across languages in that reading achievement in Spanish was highly associated with reading achievement in English; thus, students who scored low (high) in Spanish reading also scored low (high) in English reading and vice versa. These results demonstrating the success of NSS Bilinguals have been reported in other research on DL programs and in other educational contexts, and show that such students, who begin as ELs but are educated through both Spanish and English, demonstrate higher levels of achievement and educational expectations than their monolingual English-speaking or Spanish-speaking peers. Some have attributed this educational success to the positive impact of bilingualism on cognition and academic achievement (e.g., Collins, Toppelberg, Suárez-Orozco, O’Connor, & Nieto-Castañon, 2011; Cummins, 1991; Lindholm-Leary, 2001; Lindholm & Aclan, 1991). Although it is harder to document empirically, it is also likely that how students are positioned in the classroom has an important impact on their achievement. In transitional bilingual programs, students’ Spanish is seen as a liability to be overcome, but in DL programs the Spanish-speaking children are positioned as “those who know” during Spanish lessons, which can have a positive impact on their sense of ability, their engagement, and their learning.²

**Spanish language development in DL programs**

In this section, Spanish language development refers to literacy (reading and writing) and oral (listening and speaking) proficiency as well as outcomes from norm-referenced language proficiency tests, academic achievement tests, teacher rating measures, student rating measures, and careful analyses of spoken or written language. Unfortunately, there are few studies that examine Spanish language development as most research focuses on English, especially the English...
language development of EL students. This dearth of accountability in Spanish is unfortunate and will be discussed later.

**Literacy: reading and writing in Spanish**

Spanish language development has largely been reported in terms of students’ performance on the Spanish reading and language components of standardized tests, including both cross-sectional and longitudinal data. Students in quality DL programs across the grade spans from 3–12 score “at” to “well above” grade level in Spanish reading achievement tests (e.g., Lindholm-Leary, 2001, 2003; Lindholm-Leary & Hernández, 2011; Lindholm-Leary & Howard, 2008), which is true for analyses focused only on Latino NES and NSS (Lindholm-Leary 2003; Lindholm-Leary & Hernández, 2011), though most studies of Spanish reading in secondary grades tend to vary more from below to slightly above grade level (e.g., Cazabon, Nicoladis, & Lambert, 1998; Lindholm-Leary, 2001, 2003; Lindholm-Leary & Hernández, 2011; Potowski, 2007). There are important differences in Spanish reading achievement according to student background and school demographic characteristics, which will be elaborated on.

Not surprising, in tests of Spanish reading, vocabulary lags behind reading comprehension (e.g., Lindholm-Leary, 2005; Potowski, 2007). In a longitudinal study of NSS/ELs in a dual language program, Lindholm-Leary (2005) found that they began kindergarten with fairly low vocabulary scores in Spanish (33rd percentile) but made substantial gains to above average (61st percentile) by grade three, which were sustained in grade six. In addition, their Spanish vocabulary scores in grade three, but not kindergarten, were highly correlated with reading achievement scores on norm-referenced achievement tests in both Spanish and English. By eighth grade, Potowski (2007) found that Spanish speakers in DL scored at the 49th percentile on a vocabulary subtest of a standardized reading achievement, which is a statistical average, but far lower than a group of NSS who had recently arrived from Latin America, who scored at the 79th percentile. In contrast, on the reading comprehension portion of the test, NSS scored at the 67th percentile, and closer to the recent arrivals, who scored at the 77th percentile.

There have been a few qualitative examinations of Spanish reading and writing development among students in two-way programs. This research is important because it goes beyond reporting scores on achievement tests and provides detailed descriptions of students’ actual reading and writing. These studies found that students showed good progress and developed high-level reading and writing skills in both languages, (Howard, Christian, & Genesee 2004; Howard & Sugarman, 2007; Serrano & Howard 2003). While NSS tend to be stronger in Spanish than in English on the Cloze measures of reading comprehension (Howard et al., 2004), they tend to score the same in Spanish and English in their writing development from third through fifth grade. Further, Serrano and Howard (2003) report more influence of English in their Spanish writing samples than vice versa. NSS students’ Spanish writing skills were fairly sophisticated in all four domains of analysis (organization, topic development, mechanics, and language use), but particularly with regard to organization. The Spanish essays were usually comparable to the English essays in terms of organization and topic development, but they showed more mechanical errors, more linguistic/grammatical errors (e.g., word order, word choice, and subject-verb agreement), and some influences from English, mostly in borrowing English vocabulary, and also some influence from English grammar and mechanics. There were only a few instances of code-switching in the Spanish essays, and all were flagged with quotation marks. By eighth grade, Potowski (2007) reported that NSS scored 24.9 out of 30 on a global writing measure, which was very close to the 26.0 found among the NSS recent arrivals.
Oral language proficiency: listening and speaking in Spanish

To examine oral Spanish proficiency, researchers have used standardized exams like the Language Assessment Scales-Oral (LAS-O) and the Woodcock-Johnson or Woodcock Munoz; teacher rating rubrics like the Stanford Foreign Language Oral Skills Evaluation Matrix (FLOSEM) and California’s Students Oral Language Observation Matrix (SOLOM); and student self-rating rubrics. Each of these assessments indicates that NSS and NES (both Latino and non-Latino) develop fairly high levels of proficiency in Spanish over the course of their schooling in a DL program. For example, Howard and Christian (1997), using the LAS-O, reported that 88% of NSS were fluent in Spanish in first grade, which rose to fully 100% from second through fifth grades. Howard et al. (2004) noted that as a group, the NSS students experienced a subtle shift from slight dominance in Spanish in grade 3 to comparable scores in English and Spanish by the end of grade 5, while the NES students were always clearly dominant in English; it should be noted that it was not clear what percentage of these NES students were Latino. Similarly, Lindholm-Leary (2001) found that almost all NSS were orally proficient in Spanish from grade 2, and most NES were proficient by grade 6. However, students in 90:10 programs, especially NES, were more likely to be proficient in Spanish compared to students in 50:50 programs (Lindholm-Leary, 2016b). These results held whether they were examined from a cross-sectional or a longitudinal perspective, and regardless of the language measures used (e.g. LAS-O, Bilingual Syntax Measure, or SOLOM). Potowski (2007) reported that DL eighth grade Spanish speakers scored 5.1 out of 6 on the FLOSEM, only slightly behind recent arrivals who scored at the maximum. More recently at a different school, she found that NES Bilingual, NSS Bilingual, and NSS EL students in the DL program scored higher on the LAS-O listening comprehension test than did all three groups of students in the same building but attending an all English program (Potowski 2016; Figure 28.1), which constitutes evidence that DL programs contribute to the maintenance of students’ oral Spanish proficiency.

Figure 28.1 Scores on the LAS-O Spanish listening comprehension test (Potowski 2016)
Regarding specific aspects of Spanish grammar, Gathercole (2002) found that by fifth grade, NSS in two-way programs show significantly greater proficiency in certain structures (e.g., gender distinctions) over NSS in English mainstream programs. Montrul and Potowski (2007) noted that NSS and NES bilinguals showed incomplete knowledge of feminine gender agreement (for example, describing a drawing as containing “abejas amarillos” instead of “amarillas”) compared to monolingual Spanish speakers in Mexico, although there was no decline in their accuracy across grade levels, which has been reported for NSS in English mainstream programs (Gathercole, 2002). These research studies are important in demonstrating the significant impact that DL programs can serve in promoting Spanish language development.

Despite these positive results, other research demonstrates that many students do not reach the high levels of academic Spanish proficiency that DL programs seek to promote, and that their Spanish diminishes in the secondary grades. For example, Potowski (2007) reported that among a group of eighth grade students, their Spanish proficiency was considerably less well developed than their English proficiency. Lindholm-Leary (2007) found that about 10% of high school NSS and NES, who had graduated from DL programs, rated their Spanish skills at a fairly low level. In a study of high school students, de Jong and Bearse (2011) reported that former DL students commented on their diminishing oral proficiency in Spanish due to less instructional time in Spanish, little content taught through Spanish, less status for Spanish at school, and overall less use, even among NSS who used Spanish at home.

**Impact of student and community characteristics on DL students’ Spanish language proficiency**

Student background factors are of particular importance in understanding outcomes in DL programs because many NSS and NES students, in addition to being members of an ethnic minority, are also low income. Research shows that young NSS children from low-SES homes enter preschool on average scoring at low levels of proficiency on language proficiency tests in their primary language of Spanish, as well as in English (Collins et al., 2011; Espinosa, 2013; Lindholm-Leary, 2014, 2016a; Paez et al., 2007). However, parental education levels have not been found to correlate with these children’s oral Spanish levels (Lindholm-Leary, 2014) nor with their Spanish literacy (Genesee et al., 2006; Lindholm-Leary, 2001) although it appears correlated with both speaking and reading in English.

Importantly, many ELs, especially Spanish speakers, experience segregated schooling experiences or schools with high percentages of ELs, minority populations, and poverty (Aud et al., 2010; Lindholm-Leary & Block, 2010), factors that are often associated with educational underachievement. While some schools have implemented a DL program because of the strong research base demonstrating their success in promoting higher levels of language proficiency and achievement, others have done so in an attempt to desegregate the school. Of the few studies conducted in segregated low-income schools, results show that: (1) students in DL programs score as well as or better in English than similar background students in mainstream programs; and (2) they scored above grade level in assessments conducted in Spanish (Lindholm-Leary, 2001; Lindholm-Leary & Block, 2010). Thus, while more segregated and predominantly Latino low-income schools typically place students at risk for underachievement, DL programs within these schools enable students to achieve at similar or higher levels than their non-DL peers. In addition, they demonstrate higher levels of bilingualism than their peers in less segregated schools. It appears that these schools may provide more opportunities for students to use Spanish and thus enhance their bilingual proficiency, which leads to higher academic achievement.
Critical issues and topics

This section provides discussion of four critical issues and topics that likely impact the development of Spanish language proficiency and achievement in DL students: (1) early education in Spanish; (2) assessment and accountability in Spanish; (3) selecting effective DL models; and (4) promoting community opportunities for Spanish use.

The importance of promoting early Spanish language development in preschool and primary grades (K-2)

The research reviewed in this chapter clearly demonstrates the importance of at least some primary language instruction. Despite all of the evidence, there is considerable pressure to promote English proficiency over primary language proficiency. This is reflected in the fact that all states have developed English language arts standards, but no accountability or professional development exists for teachers instructing through Spanish in PreK, which means that many pre-schoolers experience English-only instruction (although see WIDA and CA Common Core for Spanish language arts standards). The Federal Government via Head Start recognizes the importance of providing services in students’ primary language, and other state agencies are beginning to recognize how critical the primary language is to students’ early conceptual and language development. For example, in 2010, Illinois was the first state to mandate bilingual preschool programs for students who are limited in English proficiency.

Policies for universal preschool with young language minority children from low-SES homes should promote primary language and literacy development. There are three reasons for this recommendation. First, there are no disadvantages for children instructed in bilingual settings over children in English settings with respect to English language and preliteracy skills. Second, there are disadvantages for the children in English settings because their Spanish language and preliteracy skills deteriorate relative to children in bilingual programs. Third, because of the findings that primary language proficiency is related to English language proficiency, then bilingual instruction provides an additional advantage.

The importance of assessment and accountability in Spanish

Most research on effective schools highlights the importance of assessment and accountability, pointing out the benefits of using student achievement data to shape and/or monitor program effectiveness (e.g., Howard et al., 2017). While DL programs have a stated goal of biliteracy, there is often little accountability for demonstrating grade-level reading skills in Spanish. In fact, as mentioned earlier, unfortunately many DL programs do not assess oral or literacy skills in Spanish. As a result, it is unclear whether students are making adequate progress. This is particularly important given the findings discussed earlier demonstrating that reading achievement in Spanish is highly correlated with reading achievement in English; that is, if an NSS child is assessed only in English and scores poorly in reading achievement, how do we know if that child lacks reading skills (which a measure in Spanish would provide) or has well-developed reading skills in one language (Spanish) that have not yet transferred to the second language (English)? Furthermore, to provide feedback to a parent or school board about a child’s progress in Spanish and address the goals of bilingualism and biliteracy requires that we measure the child’s progress in Spanish.

Also, studies show that it is important to disaggregate assessment data to identify and solve issues of curriculum, assessment, and instructional alignment. This is very important in providing
a vertically articulated program in Spanish from PreK to 12 that provides goals and measurable objectives for each grade level. It is also important in determining whether the needs of all groups of students are being met in the program.

**Selecting a dual language model**

One issue that can impact DL program design concerns the allocation of time given to each language: 50:50, 80:20, and 90:10 are the most common models. Many administrators, educators, and parents expect that more exposure to English in school will result in greater English proficiency. This time-on-task rationale often results in pressure for DL programs to add more instructional time in English or to dissolve the program altogether. However, as shown in this chapter, the level of proficiency in English is not related to the amount of exposure to English in school in a simple correlational fashion, for home Spanish speakers nor home English speakers. In contrast, there is a relationship between amount of exposure to Spanish and student outcomes in Spanish. That is, more instructional time spent in Spanish (90:10 programs vs. 50:50 programs) positively impacts achievement in Spanish, with higher levels of oral proficiency in Spanish. Research is inconclusive about whether more instructional time in Spanish is associated with higher reading achievement by eighth grade. However, it should be pointed out that by middle school, most students are only receiving one or two periods of Spanish instruction each day.

**Promoting opportunities for students to use and develop Spanish in their communities**

Though there are still a limited number of DL programs at the middle and high school levels, there are some interesting prototypes of programs that offer Spanish at a much higher level for students. For example, in high schools in Ventura, California and El Paso, Texas, DL students enroll in a course in translation and then serve in an internship that enables these students to use their Spanish and translation skills in a community context.

Many elementary schools provide various leadership and educational opportunities for DL students to use Spanish in different ways. For example, at the K-8 Nestor Language Academy Charter in San Diego, California and Romig Middle School in Anchorage, Alaska, students learn a variety of skills that enhance their Spanish language or general oral production, including interviewing, tutoring, serving as classroom or school language ambassadors, performing arts (theater, drama, singing, dancing), or film/video production. Students in these programs are highly motivated to continue to develop their Spanish and oral production skills.

**Future research and implications for practice**

This chapter has discussed research on the Spanish language proficiency and achievement of Latino NSS and NES students in dual language programs. Research is consistent across a variety of studies in showing that they develop strong levels of Spanish and English oral proficiency and literacy. Furthermore, students develop Spanish proficiency in programs that use more Spanish (90:10) and less Spanish (50:50), though exposure to more Spanish yields higher proficiency in Spanish and bilingual proficiency. Higher levels of Spanish proficiency and bilingualism are strongly preferred because research clearly shows that DL students who are highly bilingual are more academically successful (e.g., Collins et al., 2011; Genesee et al., 2006; Lindholm-Leary, 2017; Lindholm-Leary & Genesee, 2010; National Academies of Sciences, 2017).
While the research demonstrates clear positive student outcomes in DL programs, there are some challenges and future research needs that would provide more clarity in how to promote stronger student outcomes in Spanish language development:

1. Methodologically, DL programs are not always clearly defined with respect to the amount of instructional time devoted to each language, the duration of the program, or what instructional practices were used, and this can make it difficult to compare results across programs or to replicate results and program models. In addition, larger and more systematic research programs that are also longitudinal are needed to address the variety of factors that could impact students’ Spanish language development such as consistent use of Spanish during teacher instruction and during student interactions, extent to which Spanish language arts integrates language structure and metalinguistic skills, status of Spanish in the classroom and at school, and the volume of Spanish literature and other books in the school library for homework and leisure activities.

2. There are many challenges in assessing the Spanish language development of students. First, there are few valid and reliable assessment measures that can yield information about students’ oral language and literacy competencies. Second, how can we better assess those communicative proficiencies that NSS have and that NES need to learn to be communicatively proficient in Spanish? Third, what sort of attrition is there in NSS even in DL programs that could be ameliorated with more effective instructional practices? Additional research would be useful to understand how bilingualism impacts student outcomes. To address many of these issues, we need more extensive studies of Spanish language development that go beyond quick teacher rating measures.

3. Further research is required to elucidate the characteristics of high quality DL programs and how DL programs of different quality impact NSS and NES student Spanish language development.

4. There is little research into the development of oral academic language proficiency and literacy within DL programs, and especially how to promote high levels of biliteracy, which are stated goals of DL programs. State and local standards and corresponding curricula are developed for teaching students through one language; thus, they do not provide assistance in how to promote literacy in two languages. Further, there is insufficient research to guide educators as to how to promote biliteracy. Many researchers have examined biliteracy and found that language and literacy skills in the primary language do play an important role in the second language (e.g., see National Academy of Sciences, 2017), and there is research on the skills that appear to transfer from one language to another and on instructional approaches or strategies that may be most beneficial for promoting literacy in a second language (e.g., National Academy of Sciences, 2017). It would be helpful for administrators and teachers at DL sites to explore this research and develop collaborative relationships with university researchers with the goal to translate this research into more effective practice at the school site.

5. Greater alignment and collaboration PreK-16 among language educators, curriculum specialists, and assessment developers would be helpful in promoting clear pathways for students to develop Spanish language proficiency across the grade spans. These children are future “heritage speakers” populating high school and university programs.

6. Finally, there is a pressing need for teacher development programs, both pre-service and in-service. Many DL teachers have state bilingual certifications, but this does not typically prepare them to teach content through Spanish. Resources such as the Association of Two-Way/Dual Language Education (ATDLE) and Hamayan, Genesee, & Cloud (2013) can be very useful.
Spanish in dual language programs

Notes

1 It is important to note that the NES group includes monolingual English speakers and the range of Spanish/English bilingual students who are proficient in English and may have from no to considerable proficiency in Spanish. The NSS group includes monolingual Spanish speakers and Spanish/English bilinguals who were identified as English learners at entry to school, but who may vary from no to some proficiency in English. Over time as NSS/ELs become reclassified as proficient in English, many educational agencies categorize them as English speakers while some researchers keep them in the NSS group in order to show the long-term outcomes of NSS/EL students.

2 K. Potowski, personal communication.

3 This is consistent with immersion research in Canada and elsewhere, showing that students in total immersion programs have higher levels of proficiency in the partner language than students in partial (50:50) immersion programs (Genesee, 2004; Genesee & Lindholm-Leary, 2013).

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