

THE DANGER OF THE DUAL LANGUAGE ENRICHMENT NARRATIVE

Abstract

Dual language bilingual education (DLBE) programs are increasing in numbers across the United States, in part due to the rising number of unprecedented large-scale initiatives making these little-studied, top-down, contexts important for language research. In this paper, I deployed a multi-method, multi-site, comparative analysis to critically examine educator discourses addressing student participation in DLBE programs from two highly distinct bilingual education contexts [one in which the programs are generally designed for native English speakers (Utah) and one in which the programs are predominantly designed for native Spanish speakers (Texas)]. I examined how educators discussed what students the program serves and what language ideologies emerged and operated in educator discourse. Amidst multiple circulating ideologies, teachers across both contexts drew on an “enrichment narrative” and positioned DLBE programs as “gifted and talented” or “not fit for everyone.” Embedded within these narratives were language ideologies of linguistic purism and language standardization. This paper demonstrates how discourses of elitism and giftedness in DLBE can be problematic and exclude students who have the most to gain and lose from program participation. Implications for social-justice oriented DLBE program models and program implementation are discussed.