Poverty and Empowerment Discourse in Utah Dual Immersion Classrooms

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POVERTY AND EMPOWERMENT DISCOURSE IN UTAH DUAL IMMERSION CLASSROOMS

by

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Submitted to Brigham Young University in partial fulfillment of graduation requirements for University Honors

Education Department
Brigham Young University
June 2018

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This paper considers the discourse, or communication, that occurs in dual immersion programs in Utah. I take a sociocultural perspective to address the question of whether and how these programs are meeting the unique needs of the students enrolled in them. I consider two tasks frequently viewed in five consecutive days of filming: mirroring/repeated phrases and partner talk. Findings suggest that although they have promise, they often do not meet the intended aims of comprehension and language development. The findings also show that these tasks do little to empower participants. The conclusions and implications suggest that commonly accepted tasks in monolingual classrooms are not appropriate or useful for classrooms where second languages are taught.

Keywords: empowerment, poverty, dual immersion, discourse, elementary education, mirroring, partner talk
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Drs. Rosborough and Black-Hults for inspiring me to do research, and helping me start that process; my parents, grandparents and other family members for their support; Lauren Jennings and others who helped me complete my first year of teaching while working on this thesis; my son Benjamin who kindly waited to be born until after I defended the thesis, and then put up with me reading further revisions to him; and finally, my amazing husband, who has believed in my dreams from the very beginning, even when I didn’t believe in them myself. Je t’aime!


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Introduction

Dual Language Immersion (DLI) programs as we have them today began in 1968 in Florida. Cuban refugee parents wanted to make sure their children maintained their native Spanish while living in the United States. What is considered to be the first dual immersion program began at Coral Way Elementary offering instruction in Spanish and English. Its success sparked the creation of other similar programs across the country (de Jong, 2017). In 2011, there were approximately 448 dual immersion programs in the United States (Center for Applied Linguistics, 2011). According to the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL), a dual immersion program:

Provide[s] English learners language and content instruction through two languages for a minimum of five years with the goal of promoting bilingualism and biliteracy, high levels of academic achievement, and increased levels of cross-cultural competence; [and] Are designed specifically to meet the needs of language minority students, but may also in some instances offer multilingual enrichment opportunities for students already fluent in English. (CAL, 2016)

There are varying types of dual immersion programs: one-way, two-way, etc. This paper focuses on a two-way immersion program. That is, the student population is composed of a relatively equal number of students who speak English natively and who speak the target language natively. Typically, students spend half a day learning content in each language (Ex: Students may learn English Language Arts and science in English, and Spanish Language Arts, social studies, and math in Spanish).

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1 Utah boasted the highest number of dual immersion schools at that time, 58, followed by Minnesota with 50 and Hawaii with 34.
Dual immersion programs first began in Utah in 2008 (becoming official in 2012) with the passing of International Initiatives (Utah Dual Language Immersion, 2017c). There are currently 195 schools participating, with six different languages being taught: Spanish, Chinese, Portuguese, French, German, Russian (listed in order of frequency). All tolled, approximately 30,000 students in Utah participate in these programs (Utah Dual Language Immersion, 2017d). The two-way programs are mostly Spanish (101 Spanish, 55 Chinese, etc.). As mentioned earlier, Utah claims the largest number of DLI programs/classrooms per capita in the U.S. (Center for Applied Linguistics, 2011).

This study uses the Vygotskian sociocultural lens that language is a mediational tool for meaning making. It is intertwined with emotion, thought, feeling, identity and development (Vygotsky, 1987, 1986). Such a perspective supports previous research in how to understand natural discourse and second language learning in elementary classrooms (Rosborough, 2014, 2016). In addition to understanding natural language, this study focuses on a critical pedagogical view of how language empowers or disempowers second language learning participants is highlighted.

**Theoretical Lens and Research Problem**

Education is based on language, semiotics and the use of other tools in communicative activities designed to support the teaching and learning needs of all participants (Halliday, 1982; van Lier, 2004; Vygotsky, 1987). Human language encompasses the use of semiotics, psychological, symbolic, and physical tools, and as such, language and communication between people is always an embodied process (McCafferty, 2004; Thibault, 2011). Language includes/imbues identity and social positionings (Norton, 2013; Pavlenko & Norton, 2007). These discourses also carry
socializations imbued with empowering and disempowering “positionings” in the classroom and can impact, for example, the effectiveness and longevity of student education (Dworin, 2011). While I use a Vygotskian-based theoretical lens that promotes language as speech, emotion, and identity intertwined (Vygotsky, 1986, 1987), I extend this lens towards the need to understand the nature of how classroom discourse empowers and disempowers participants, particularly for those learning a new second language. Stetsenko (2017) claims that such language and socialization as authentically occurring in the classroom continues to be an area of need in educational research, noting the “lack of discussion about race and power in sociocultural theories including those in Vygotsky's lineage” (p. 24).

The prominence of DLI programs invites us as educators to consider the students in these programs, and the extent to which their educational environment addresses power, privilege, and poverty. According to Foucault (1977) all discourse is backed and infused with differing power positions. Some discourse may empower while others may cause a poverty, reduction, or imbalance between interlocutors. In classroom settings, teachers are positioned as the authoritative voice with students playing the role of learners. The DLI setting I studied had both first language Latino/a learners (hereafter referred to as English Learners, or ELs) and dominant first language English speaking learners. In particular, I looked at the essence of the language shared between all the participants in the classroom and observed how positionings (part of language socialization) through discourse occurred. Such "positioning" and language socialization has been researched demonstrating characteristics and attributes in language, with discourse analysis identifying terms, words, or concepts describing people's (in this case
teachers' and students') dispositions; inter-cultural relations; and translinguaging occurrences indicating the movement to overcome lingua-biases (Garcia, 2011; Otheguy, Garcia, & Reid, 2015). This includes the idea that language crosses political boundaries between nations and policies; socialization issues, including the lower status of differing language minorities, and in general, to analyze the type of language used with and for under-represented populations, (Dworin, 2011; Howard, Sugarman, & Christian, 2003). Such language and socialization as authentically occurring in the classroom, continues to be an area of need in educational research.

DLI programs aim to help ELs become bilingual and biliterate, as well as develop cross-cultural competencies (CAL, 2016). Rich and empowering discourse is fundamental and essential to accomplish this. When this discourse is present, students effectively develop linguistically and culturally. They learn and use language that meets their needs. They also get to know one another on an authentic level as authenticity is key to empowering discourse. Thus, in order to help DLI programs accomplish their purpose, one must consider the discourse being used in these programs, and the effect to which it carries poverty and empowerment issues.

**Literature Review**

**Definitions**

Discourse can be defined as the particular context, situation, and vocabulary related to or embedded in context and situations. It usually conveys a particular message, or is related to a larger theme (Foucault, 1977). It may empower or cause poverty, reduction, or imbalance between interlocutors/participants. Poverty discourse can take the form of marginalization, empowerment, or control of voices in the classroom.
When considering the definition of empowerment and poverty in this setting, I chose to follow van Lier’s (1996) discussion of agency and authenticity. Thus, something is empowering when it demonstrates a learner’s agency, which includes choices demonstrating learner ownership (i.e., identity), coupled with language authenticity.

“Agency is not simply an individual character trait or activity, but a contextually enacted way of being in the world” (van Lier, 2004, p. 163). It is related to and effected by our sociocultural background, and can be expressed as an individual or a group. When I refer to creating agency, I do not mean that a learner is completely independent. Rather, the learner has the ability to co-construct knowledge or work co-dependently with others.

Authenticity “realizes a free choice and is an expression of what a person genuinely feels and believes” in relation to being purposeful to the learner’s life both in and beyond the classroom. “Inauthentic actions, on the other hand, are undertaken because everyone else is doing them, they ‘ought’ to be done, or in general they are motivated by external forces” (van Lier, 1996, p. 13). Thus, as a student interacts with others in their [contemporary] world and expresses what they genuinely feel and believe, they are empowered. When they are prevented or discouraged from doing so, one can see an example of poverty and disempowerment. Poverty discourse shares a similar definition. If something is useful in the students’ lives (authentic and agentive) it would not be considered poverty discourse. Tasks that take away from the agency and authenticity of a students’ actions or words create space for poverty discourse.

Zammit (2011) and Haberman (1991) have conducted research concerning poverty discourse in traditional classrooms. Zammit identified three elements in her study

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2 See Vygotsky’s idea of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD).
with the Identikids school that can be useful in categorizing poverty discourse. Students were engaged (and not experiencing poverty discourse) when they were involved in “deep learning experiences that were intellectually challenging (highly cognitive), encouraged students to commit emotionally (highly affective) and kept them focused, busy and active (highly operative).” (2011, p. 217). The experience provided in this study allowed students opportunities to experience authenticity and agency as they created PowerPoint presentations that represented themselves as learners. They were given freedom to choose what to include in the presentation and worked with peers to create similar presentations.

While there is evidence that DLI (two-way immersion) can help build bridges between linguistically heterogeneous student bodies (Howard et al., 2003), this setting has been identified for the lack of research available, particularly concerning how a variety of dimensions of diversity (including empowerment/poverty) are addressed (Palmer, 2010; Scanlan & Palmer, 2009; Henderson & Palmer, 2015). Particular to a Vygotskian lens, Stetsenko (2017) expands his “sociocultural” approach, calling for the need for a more transformative activist stance, viewing people as situated and co-creators of not only their own lives but also the world around them.

**Methodology**

**Question**

The main question I am addressing is: What does poverty and empowerment discourse look like (e.g., characteristics, attributes, themes, dispositions) in a case study of a Dual Language Immersion classroom? This is an endeavor to create a starting case-study that identifies characteristics or attributes demonstrating empowering/disempowering discourse through descriptive analysis. That being said, I
hope that this research provides implications that move beyond simple classroom
discourse description (i.e., gathering list(s) of discourse characteristics) including how the
dynamics of humans and language are situated in community practices (Lave & Wenger,
1991), to performing research in a way that transforms and creates new practices
(Stetsenko, 2017; Vygotsky, 1986). That is, I want this study to do more than just provide
a description of discourse. I hope it will help transform current educational practices and
creates new ones.

Methods
Our methodology is based on discourse analysis (Scollon & Scollon, 2006; Wells,
1999). Using a corpus linguistic data gathering approach, I analyze language as
authentically used in the classroom between teacher(s) and their students. An analysis of
corpus linguistics using natural discourse provides a process of understanding the
relationships among meanings, ideological positionings and context. My interest in using
this approach was to analyze the language being used in-situ, where capturing language
in context provides “an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those
involved” (Merriam, 1998, p. 19). Video recordings of teaching were performed and then
transcripts of interactions were created. From the transcripts, types of discourses have
been analyzed and identified for social and equitable themes found in the corpus.

My focus has been on identifying poverty-empowerment discourse and any
accompanying language patterns concerning poverty, empowerment and/or privilege
between participants. I attempt to not only identify the characteristics of how poverty and
empowerment issues are addressed in dual-immersion classrooms, but also use the
discourse analysis to provide insights into how such characteristics are manifested and for what purposes.

One way of viewing this type of discourse is to identify the practice of including the value of a student's identity and background in the activities and tasks (Mougeon, Nadasdi, & Rehner, 2010; Potowski, 2004; Valdés, 2015). In other studies, terms, phrases, or words have been identified, such as those that: a. legitimize certain practices of one culture over another, b. marginalize certain populations, c. strengthen certain "cultural" claims, d. describe moral justifications/stances, e. shame, f. encourage passivity of one's identity or background, or g. lacks terms that encourage empowerment to change the status quo (Potowski, 2007; Tedick, Christian, & Fortune, 2011; Valdez, V., Delavan, G., & Freire, J., 2014). While I chose not to use any formal a priori categorizations representing poverty-empowerment discourse, I certainly have culled from previous research concerned with this area.

Coding of the data included the reviewing and transcribing of the discourse during the classroom activities. The teachers and students were unaware of the study’s specific focus on empowerment and poverty discourse and so it is reasonable to assume that all participants participated in a natural way with no test intrusion.

Specific to this study, only two tasks were selected: Mirroring and Partner Talk. These tasks were selected based on their frequency as well as their rich characteristics of having multiple participants talk. Mirroring occurred on at least five separate occasions during the filming. Our discussion on mirroring starts by considering its roots. Mirroring is a technique that comes from Whole Brain Teaching, a “revolutionary teaching system” developed by Chris Biffle (Biffle, 2013, cover). It is marketed as a way to quickly
capture students’ attention and ensure understanding. In essence, students are mimicking the teacher’s words and gestures for a certain period of time. “Mirror is one of WBT’s [Whole Brain Teaching] simplest and most powerful techniques…. As students imitate the motions you use to teach a lesson, their motor cortex, the brain’s most reliable memory area, is automatically engaged.” (Ibid., p. 77) WBT suggests using it for explaining how to fill out a form, telling a story, or anything for which you want your students’ complete attention. Says Bifflle, “We learn by imitating, mirroring. It is not just monkey see, monkey do. It is monkey see, monkey’s brain rewires itself.” (Ibid., p. 80) Thus, the intent is that students quickly pick up on information delivered by the teacher, leading to greater understanding and compliance. An instance of Whole Brain Teaching marketing: “If classroom instruction entertainingly engages the whole brain, students have no mental area left over to create disruptions.” (Bifflle, 2013, Back cover) As one professor who saw an example of mirroring put it, “You have no power issues when everyone is a robot.”³

Partner talk is encouraged as a full part of the Dual Immersion program as a way to promote language development. It was observed on every day of filming in at least one class, though most of the time it was both. Both of these tasks allow for speech participation from the teacher and students and provide different contexts in which one can analyze empowerment and poverty: teacher-student (whole class), teacher-student (individual and partner), student-class, and student-student.

**Setting**

³ 2017 SCT/SLA Conference, Ben White.
The participating school is a Title I rural school in a semi-agrarian community, which is becoming a more dominant service community for high-end ski resorts. The district reports a large percentage of Hispanic students. 29.6% of the students in the school are Hispanic or Latino. The school also has a 1:1 technology ratio; every child has access to a laptop or similar device. This is the school’s first year in operation.

A request through district personnel was made for teachers to volunteer their classroom for data collection at the district level, and the two teachers selected met the criteria of being a collaborative Spanish-English 50/50 classroom. A 50/50 schedule means that students spend half of their day learning content in the target language, and the other half learning content in English. The class selected, for example, began the first morning I filmed with the English teacher. They then switched to the Spanish class in the afternoon. The next day they began in the Spanish classroom, and ended their day in the English classroom. This pattern continues to allow for an equal amount of time in both classes.

The typical schedule, regardless of which class they are in, is outlined below (See Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:45</td>
<td>School Begins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:45-10:10</td>
<td>Tier 2 Instruction (Special Education, GATE, ELL, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:15-10:30</td>
<td>Recess</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:00-12:40</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:45-2:25</td>
<td>Specials (Art, Music, PE, Library)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:25</td>
<td>School Ends</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Typical schedule

Participants. The English teacher is from the United States and has taught for five years. This is her third year teaching dual immersion. She studied to be an ASL interpreter and still remembers quite a bit. She also studied French and Spanish in high
school, though admits her Spanish is minimal. The Spanish teacher is originally from Venezuela. She has taught for six years. This is her first teaching dual immersion. She taught adults English before becoming an Elementary School teacher. Her English is conversational and she is able to understand the majority of what is spoken. She did comment that it is difficult for her to understand some technical or field-specific terminology.

Twenty-four third grade students participated in the study in addition to the teachers. Of these 24, none received special education services. Two received English Language support, and two others attended the school’s Gifted and Talented class (GATE). Seven received Tier 2 support for reading in English (two were native English speakers, five were English Learners, ELs). Twelve speak English at home and 12 speak Spanish. There is a range of English and Spanish levels in the classroom. The 12 ELs in the classroom range in their English level from 1.9-4.4 on the WIDA scale. This means that those on the lower end have abilities to comprehend and use general content words and phrases, as well as short phrases and sentences, while those on the higher end can comprehend and use “specific and some technical content-area language”, as well as “short, expanded, and some complex sentences” (WIDA, n.d.). Two students had a WIDA level of three or lower, classifying their English at the “developmental” level (ibid). The native English speakers’ abilities range from below grade level to above grade level.

In Spanish, the students have a wide range also. Some came into the class speaking Spanish fluently as their first language, while others would hardly speak it, cry
with frustration at attempts, and make many errors when they did speak (Spanish Teacher, Personal Communication, 2 Feb 2018).

Data Collection Methods

Three cameras were used to film the classroom. One was mobile and was mostly focused on the teacher. It was connected to a wireless microphone worn by the teacher. The other two cameras were stationary and placed in the front and back of the classroom. Multiple filming assistants helped in the filming process. The entire classroom day of these students was filmed for five consecutive days. I followed the same students on the English as well as the Spanish side. During data collection, the researchers were as non-intrusive as possible, observing the teaching and learning as it occurred naturally in the classroom (keeping the observer’s paradox to a minimum).

Five months following the filming, I performed follow-up interviews with both teachers based on predetermined and spontaneous questions. The interviews were separate (one with the English teacher and one with the Spanish teacher) and audio recorded to ensure accuracy in reporting statements. These interviews included viewing pre-selected portions of video with the teacher and discussing their reactions to watching themselves teach, reflections they have, etc.

Findings and Data

The following sections are data samples representing two tasks that were done daily in the classrooms. The tasks included in this study are Mirroring and Partner Talk.

Mirroring

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4 8:40-2:20 on Mondays, 8:40-3:20 Tuesday-Friday
Mirroring occurred only on the English side during the time I was filming. That being said, it was used extensively by the teacher during the week. When mirroring, the teacher tells the students, “Mirrors on”, accompanied by gestures. The students repeat, “Mirrors on” with the gesture. The teacher may then say, “Mirrors with words”, again with a gesture, which the students then “mirror” back to her. The students then “mirror” or mimic everything that the teacher says and gestures until she says “mirrors off”. This was used in the observed classroom largely for giving directions as shown in the example below.

The -- indicates a pause in the teacher’s speech where the students repeat.

Excerpt 1

9.19EA (1) Front 1:38-3:22

1. T: “Here’s the directions I’m going to give you. Ready? Mirrors.-- Mirrors with words.—2. Number one,-- I need-- my writing-- notebook.-- Number two,-- I need-- my-- one-- sticky 3. note.-- Number three,-- three-- 1-- I am going to open my computer.-- I am going to go to—4. David’s Elementary.-- I am going to click on,-- teacher web pages.-- I am going to 5.find, …(redirects a student)5 I-- am going to find-- Mrs. Lily’s website.-- I -- I am going to 6.click on-- Epic!-- I-- am going to find my name-- and I-- am going to put in-- my pin number.-- 7.What is it?-- Ahhhhh!!!-- 1, 2, 3, 4.-- Mirrors off.-- Ready, set, go.”

Some students repeated the “Ready, set, go” even though the mirrors were “off”. The whole exchange took a little under two minutes.

5 See Excerpt 2, line 17
As the teacher was mirroring, a few different things were happening around the classroom. Most students focused on and attempted to follow the teacher the whole time, repeating her words and gestures. From the video, one can hear several students repeating the words as fast as they can back to the teacher, as if it were a race. The energy with which the class mirrored the teacher tapered off soon after mirroring started (within the first minute). When the teacher redirected a student, all responded with more energy to the next set of instructions.

Some students, two in particular, added their own gestures (dabs, dance moves) in between the teacher’s. One of these students, a girl who sat at the front table, didn’t repeat several of the gestures, or repeated them with little gusto. Her own added gestures, however, were accompanied by a smile and done with vigor. A similar situation occurred with another student, a boy who sat at the table directly behind her.

One can see an interesting juxtaposition in this segment. First, I consider Hailey⁶, and then Rodrigo. Both students are sitting in the back of the room at adjacent desks. They would be sitting next to each other except for the space between their desks. Hailey is a white female whose first language is English. She is a high achieving student, who rarely gets in trouble for anything. She and her siblings are known in the school by teachers and students for being highly intelligent. Her Spanish is at or above average for her grade level. Rodrigo is a Hispanic male whose first language is Spanish. His English level is between developing and expanding. His home life includes a working mother and a father who has a protective order out against him. When Rodrigo arrives home, he takes care of his little sisters. One of his teachers reported that he often doesn’t make it to

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⁶ All names are pseudonyms.
school until 10:30 AM. She said, "He doesn't have a childhood. He is dad when he gets home. He acts out here because it's his only place to be a kid." (Personal communication interview, 16 February 2018).

The following excerpt is a repeat of Excerpt 1, but focuses on Hailey and Rodrigo’s actions.

Excerpt 2

9.19EA (1) Front 2:12-3:22

Hailey starts the segment eating what is presumed to be a marshmallow. At the time Excerpt 2 starts, she has already eaten two marshmallows.

1. T: I--
2. H: I
3. T: I am going to open my computer. --
4. H: [opens mouth as if to say something, moves hand in front of self with palm facing in]
5. T: I [points to self]
6. H: [points to self]
7. T: am going to go to-- [mimics typing on computer]
8. H: go to
9. T: David’s Elementary.-- [continues mimicking typing on computer]
10. H: [pauses] Elementary [smiles, and puts both hands into her desk]
11. T: I am going to click on, -- [makes exaggerated pointing motion]
12. H: click on [makes small pointing motion]
13. T: teacher web pages. -- [exaggerated pointing motion]
14. H: [small pointing motion]
15. T: I am going to find, -- [hand on forehead like brim of hat, bends slightly and moves from left to right in sweeping motion]

16. H: [puts marshmallow in mouth, looks around at other students]

17. T: Rodrigo-- [whispers]

18. All students: Rodrigo -- [whisper; H does not repeat with the class]

19. T: Mirrors with words [whispering; has one hand up, palm out, the other mimics a mouth opening and closing]

20. All students: Mirrors with words [whispering; H does not repeat words or gestures with the class]

21. H: [looks back at Rodrigo]

22. T: I-- [points to self, smiling, energetic]

23. H: [chewing]

24. T: am going to find-- [hand on forehead like brim of hat, bends slightly and moves from left to right in sweeping motion]

25. H: [chewing]

26. T: Mrs. Lily's website. -- [points to self in exaggerated motion, nodding head]

27. H: [chewing]

28. T: I -- [points to self]

29. H: [chewing]

30. T: I am going to click on -- [exaggerated pointing motion]

31. H: [small, quick point, still chewing]

32. T: Epic! -- [puts both hands straight up in the air, head back, looking at ceiling]

33. H: [chewing, smiles, hands go back into desk]
34. T: I-- [points to self]

35. H: [smiles, looks around]

36. T: am going to find my name-- [points to self, nodding head]

37. H: my name [nodding head]

38. T: and I--[points to self]

39. H: [puts marshmallow in her mouth]

40. T: am going to put in--[swings hand around, points dramatically]

41. H: [chewing]

42. T: my pin number. -- [points to self]

43. H: [chewing]

44. T: What is it? -- [turns to right side of classroom, both hands out, palms up]

45. H: [chewing]

46. T: Ahhhh!!!-- [turns to left side of classroom, both hands out, palms up]

47. H: [chewing]

48. T: 1, 2, 3, 4. -- [puts up one, two, three, and four fingers respectively]

49. H: [brings one hand up to rub her eye, the other rests on the back of her chair. Four fingers are casually displayed. Still chewing]

50. T: Mirrors off. -- [both hands come up about shoulder height, palms pointed out, then fall forward so palms face floor/inward]

51. H: [hand resting on chair moves so palm pointed out and then falls forward so it faces the floor/inward]

52. T: Ready, set, go. [hands facing the floor about waist height, start inward, then go out]
As shown in Excerpt 2, Hailey repeated four of the 26 phrases that the teacher said. The gesture motions that she repeated were not fully extended or a full example of what the teacher demonstrated. From post video reviews with Teacher A, Hailey is chewing on marshmallows.\(^7\) Though she does not mirror with the rest of the class for the majority of the segment, she is not redirected.

Conversely, Rodrigo is a student often redirected for not following along with the teacher. During excerpt one, he is mirroring along with the class for steps one and two. He deviates at step three, however, as he already has his computer open on his desk. Thus, when the teacher gives directions for opening the computer, going to a website, clicking on her home page, etc. he begins to perform the tasks on the computer rather than mirroring with gestures. The teacher notices his deviation quickly and calls his name. Because the teacher has “mirrors on” when she does this, all the students repeat his name and her redirection:

Excerpt 2, Lines 17-20 “Rodrigo -- Mirrors with words--”.

Rodrigo smiles sheepishly and repeats with the class. However, he quickly goes back to discretely following her directions on the computer as she gives them instead of mirroring back.

Hailey is later recognized for being logged on and ready to go, while Rodrigo, when he shows the teacher that he is logged on is told, “That’s why [I redirected you]. Sit down.”\(^8\)

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\(^7\) A later conversation with the teacher revealed that she was eating marshmallows. Students are only allowed to eat healthy snacks in class, which explains why the student was hiding them. The teacher said she has done this all year, however, because of the student’s good behavior and good grades, the teacher doesn’t say anything about it.

\(^8\) 9.19 EA(1) 4:10-4:30
Both of these students mentioned in Excerpt 2 when considered from a mirroring standpoint are off task. Neither is following along with the teacher. Rodrigo is for some reason redirected while Hailey is not. It would appear that Rodrigo is the greater offender of the two (his actions were noticeable enough to the teacher to warrant being redirected in front of the class). When one looks closer at the student’s actions however, it is clear that he may have been the most authentically engaged in the task of all the students in the class.

In general, and as a review of the video with the teacher, it was noted the class struggled to repeat phrases that contained the future tense. Phrases such as “I am going to oooooppen my computer” were repeated as “ooopen my computer” OR “I’m going to open my computer” (losing the extension of the beginning of the word). “I am going to go to” was repeated as simply “go to”. Other phrases also containing “going to” were repeated as mumbles. Some students did try to repeat the whole phrase simultaneously with those that shortened the phrase, resulting in a jumbled class response. The only clearly intelligible parts were the emphasized words: “open my computer”; “go to”; “click on”; “my name”, etc. The teacher also used mirroring for teaching vocabulary and giving short instructions.

Both teachers also used repeated phrases in their classrooms. Some phrases and songs were used as cues for directionality and movement, others for content, and others for instruction. The English teacher for example said, “Ready, set” to which the students replied, “Go” and then followed whatever direction was given. The Spanish teacher also used cues for directionality such as “Un, dos, tres, a las mesas” to which the students
responded, “Todos a la vez vamos a las mesas” [One, two, three, to the tables; Everyone together go to the tables.]\(^{10}\) In the Spanish classroom, the class also used a song to remind students to speak only Spanish in the classroom. The teacher had the students sing at different times such as coming in from lunch, or when English was heard in the classroom.

Excerpt 3

9.20SA(3) Front 7:59

1. Español, Español, se habla aquí, se habla aquí.

*Spanish, Spanish, is spoken here, is spoken here.*

2. Sólo español, solo español, se habla aquí, se habla aquí.

*Only Spanish, only Spanish, is spoken here, is spoken here.*

*Sung to the tune of Frere Jacques.

Another repeated phrase used in the English teacher’s class was “All eyes on _______ (student)”. The students then repeat, “All eyes on _______ (student)” and are instructed to turn their whole bodies to face the student who is about to speak. The student speaking is then to address the class, never the teacher. The English teacher cited higher engagement as one reason for having the students face the speaker and speak to one another.

**Partner Talk**

Both the Spanish and English sides showed multiple instances of partner talk. Here partner talk is defined as any instance in which the teacher directed students to discuss something with a person near them. Some of these partners were pre-assigned

\(^{10}\) 9.18SA(3) Front 1:45
(students moved to sit next to them, partners sat across from or next to each other), while others were spontaneous depending on where the students were seated at the time.

One example of partner talk comes from the English side. After giving instructions to students about beginning a morning meeting, the teacher directed students: “Tell your face partner what your job is.” Students then looked across the table and repeated instructions to the person sitting across from them. The teacher walked around and directed students who were not talking to their “face partners” (whether because they were talking to the person next to them instead of across from them, or, in the case of one group, because they weren’t sure what to do if their partner was gone). The students were given approximately 20 seconds to discuss, and then were called back to attention.

In the Spanish classroom, students were seated on the rug next to a pre-assigned partner during math instruction. From an earlier discussion concerning students’ favorite animals, the class has created a bar graph of the results.

Excerpt 4


   I want you to talk to your partner, how could you read this graph? Let’s go.

2. Tony: Yo se, yo lei eso porque, porque lo hicimos, lo hicimos en segundo grado. Te acuerdas?

   Los de, I know, I read that because, because we did it, we did it in second grade. Remember? The one,

   los de los fotos… [makes motion like writing on ground]

   the picture one.

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11 9.18EM(1) Back 14:00-14:26 (apprx.)
3. Guillermo: de maestra, uh, Barnes y Craft?

From Mrs. Barnes and Mrs. Craft?


No, no, no, Mrs. Barnes. The picture one.

5. Guillermo: De, de que?

Of, of what?

6. Tony: Primero del jugo, del, y otro del…

First of juice, of, and another of...

7. Guillermo: Santa Claus

Santa Claus

8. Wendy: De Santa Claus

Of Santa Claus

9. Tony: Fotos de Santa, de leer…

Pictures of Santa Claus, of reading...

10. Guillermo: [unintelligible]

[unintelligible]


…of the butterfly.

12. Guillermo: Cómo?

What?

13. Tony: Mmm no estabas.

mmmmmm you weren't there.

14. Guillermo: [Shakes head]
The students talked to their partners for just under two minutes and addressed the math problem. During this time the teacher was going from partnership to partnership facilitating and redirecting student discussion as needed. The class then discussed what this bar graph showed.

**Discussion**

**Mirroring**

The English teacher who used mirroring said that though she doesn’t subscribe to everything in Whole Brain Teaching, she has found the use of mirrors successful in her classroom. She reported that students asked for repeated instructions less. She mostly used it for giving directions. It appeared to her that gestures used especially help her EL students and those with language processing issues. She also reported using mirroring to teach vocabulary. This was especially for times when she wanted the students to repeat terms and/or definitions.

In the time between filming and interviewing, she reported a significant decrease in the amount of mirroring in her classroom. She said that the students now know how to navigate through many different tasks, such as getting on the computer program mentioned in the example, and thus don’t need to be walked through it. Mirroring was more of a scaffold for those who needed it at the beginning. Now, she uses it mostly with new directions or vocabulary.

From a sociocultural perspective, there are some serious empowerment issues with mirroring. All experience joint attention as students must be watching the teacher in order to mirror her actions. The teacher is the holder of all power when he/she is mirroring with words. They then invite the students to mimic. Students are called out
when they deviate (Excerpt 2 Line 17: see example in Findings section). However, do the students receive any of the teacher’s power when they participate in mirroring? Let us first consider the ELs in the classroom. The teacher speaks in relatively long sentences that may be hard for these students to follow. In fact, from the video it appears that all students had difficulty following along at certain parts of the mirroring. Their repetition of the words was mumbled and not very clear at certain parts. This indicates that they did not hear or understand most of that phrase well enough to repeat it. It is not likely that the students, EL or not, felt empowered while participating in this exercise if they were unable to repeat most of what was said\textsuperscript{12}. It also indicates that the students are not receiving and practicing the language that they were intended to practice in this exercise. Instead of repeating whole sentences (“I am going to open my computer”) the students simply repeated short phrases (“open my computer”). This further begs the question of the usefulness (for language development) of this practice. In the teacher’s words, mirroring is “not for building language” (Personal Interview, 16 February 2018).

Some would argue that mirroring is imitation and therefore meets students in their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). This practice could then be seen as a step to help them along in their development as they repeat words with their classmates, gain more experience with correct sentence form, and better understand directions through the use of gesture. As was discussed above, however, the students are not practicing the full and correct sentence form. In addition, specific to agency and authenticity, students are

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\textsuperscript{12} The teacher addressed this in the interview. She felt there were too many steps without the students actually moving. They could have, for example, in the instructions given in excerpt 2, gotten their notebooks, sticky notes and computers and then she could have given further directions.
given minimal space to own and create the discourse according to their interpretational needs.

When considering agency in the data, students are not generating novel thoughts or actions, nor are they responding with verbalizations or gestures that represent their own understanding. Instead, they are purely mimicking the teacher’s actions which are representative of her understanding. The action that she makes for getting a writing notebook may have little meaning to them. Had the students created their own gestures, more meaning making and language development could have occurred. Students would need to associate gesture with a word or concept, thus developing a deeper understanding of that word or concept. This personal understanding would be authentic, an expression of agency, and autonomous, thus empowering the student. Given the level of simple mimicry, the students’ participation is not considered to be co-creation or co-collaborative. Rather they are completely dependent upon the teacher in this practice. As was mentioned in the definition section, an example of an inauthentic activity is one that is undertaken simply because everyone else is doing it (van Lier, 1996). Although a simple sample, when this practice is repeated daily, a pattern of disempowerment may become a full norm in the discourse of the classroom.

In the case of the two students referenced above (Excerpt 2), Hailey and Rodrigo, one actually sees stronger examples of authenticity and agency than is visible with the other students as a result of their deviation from simple mimicry. Hailey is mostly expressing authenticity with her actions. By sneaking marshmallows and not following along, she is expressing that she does not need to follow along with the class in order to comprehend the instructions. Indeed, it seems that her teacher feels the same way,
explaining how capable she is in her school work (Personal communication interview #1, 26 February 2018). She is not however co-creating anything with the teacher or the class as she is eating her marshmallows.

Rodrigo, on the other hand, is an example of both agency and authenticity when he accomplishes the task by actually having all the materials in front of him and using them. By physically following along rather than through mimic and gestural-pantomime, he is co-constructing understanding with the teacher. He is dependent upon her for instruction, yet quickly performs the actions on his computer to meet the objectives. This deviation can be seen as an expression of his strategy seeming to show that it’s better to do the instructions now than to wait until she is done. He may be expressing, as a learner, his need to be physically following along when instructions are given. This can create more meaning for him than mimicking first and then trying to recall the steps when having to perform the actual operation. However, I label this encounter as disempowering because he is called out for not following along. The teacher attempts to stop him from performing the directions, which according to the above mentioned definition of agency and authenticity demonstrates a reduction in supporting self-regulation and empowering the student to co-create with the language. Indeed, the discourse from the teacher is not necessarily empowering Rodrigo, and since they are in mirroring mode, the entire class repeats the teacher’s specific corrections to him. Such corrections shouted out by the entire class demonstrates characteristics of shame and student-passivity, which does not meet the emotional needs of students. This is not to say that the teacher talk is not providing some support for Rodrigo to use to accomplish the objective. However, it does suggest the sole purpose of mimicry through the practice of mirroring does not
necessarily accomplish its larger intended purpose. In this case, the form of the language, including the actual procedural mimicry, takes precedence over using language for meaning-making, including the more authentic endeavor of accomplishing the objective. By definition, empowerment embedded in mirroring discourse does not suggest that students will use it in a future agentive way where they will take lead in how they participate in and through the language or how they take-up the language in their own way. It seems to suggest that as educators we often times disempower students for the sake of management, an issue that needs to be questioned and considered.

Poverty discourse can also be seen in these examples. Consider Zammit’s (2011) identification of three elements that can express authenticity and agency: “intellectually challenging (highly cognitive), encouraged students to commit emotionally (highly affective) and kept them focused, busy and active (highly operative)” (p. 217). Mirroring in and of itself is not intellectually challenging. Both the teacher and the students are engaged in repetitive rather than novel or challenging discourse. There is no original thought in this process. The students are not committed emotionally. As was mentioned above, the students repeated the phrases lacklusterly, and were most emotionally engaged when they created their own movements (ex: dance moves). And, as both Rodrigo and Hailey showed, the students were not fully “focused, busy, [nor] active” during the exchange. Hailey was more focused on eating her marshmallows unnoticed. Rodrigo was busy following the directions concretely, but not following the actions. His efforts to remain operative were redirected. Thus, according to the established views of this paper, this mirroring exercise was an example of poverty discourse.
Repeated Phrases. Both teachers used repeated phrases in the classroom. The impact of these phrases on students’ positions and empowerment depends in part upon their purpose. Many were used for transition purposes, such as the Spanish teacher’s “Un, dos, tres”. The English teacher also used them for transition. Others were used as attention signals. When a phrase is used for transition and a student chooses not to repeat the phrase, does that empower or disempower them? If they do not repeat the phrase yet still comply, are they less empowered than they would have been had they repeated the phrase? They are less unified with the group who together said the phrase. However, is the group any more empowered by having used the phrase? There is little evidence that positive or an increased contribution to agency or authenticity is found in this type of discourse. Thus, a students’ refusal to repeat a phrase with the class may be just as empowering, or even more so, to them as another student’s decision to repeat with the class (see above discussion on Rodrigo).

One strategy used in the English classroom provides a contrast to the whole class mirroring. The teacher would direct all focus to be on one student as they are sharing ideas (See “All eyes on ____” on p. 20). Sometimes the sharing is short, other times it is longer (an explanation of an idea). This sharing of the floor positions the sharing student as the holder of knowledge. They have their classmates’ and teacher’s full attention. In this position, they are able to share authentic thoughts and feelings. In addition, the opportunity is presented for them to co-construct knowledge. In general, this type of discourse presents a greater opportunity for empowerment than does whole class mirroring.
The Spanish song referenced above (Excerpt 3) was also used for different purposes and to different ends. The song was sung before the class came into the classroom or at times when the teacher heard English being spoken. In these senses, it was directed towards the class as a whole. Understandably, a sense of unification may occur when every participant in the class repeats the same phrases multiple times together. In addition, it carries the content of recommitment to the classroom rules of speaking the target language in the classroom. However, the song was also at times directed to an individual. During multiple times, students would turn someone in for speaking English: “So and so was speaking in English”. The teacher would then respond by beginning to sing the song, pointing at the offending student. The other students would join in, all wagging their fingers and gleefully singing “Español, Español, se habla aquí…” This could be considered a unifying activity for all in the class (except for the one student), however it carries with it serious empowerment issues. The students had permission to act as police for one another, thereby putting some in positions of power (those who were speaking Spanish). Those who weren’t speaking Spanish were disempowered as they were publicly whipped back into shape so to speak. Their offense was noted and they were brought back into line with the rest of the class speaking Spanish.

Repeated phrases, when considered in the light of poverty and empowerment, fall into a similar category with mirroring. They are empowering when they allow students to express their feelings and become co-creators of knowledge. The English teacher’s “All eyes on _____” can allow for that (p. 20). However, other phrases such as the Spanish song references (Excerpt 3) above, are purely for classroom management. In that sense,
they often do not provide space for students to co-create knowledge or express their feelings, thus disempowering the students. The power rests purely with the one enforcing the rules, which most of the time is the teacher.

Some of the repeated phrases and mirroring were used as springboards for furthering knowledge. In one instance, for example the teacher reviewed the definition of a sentence, and then asked her students what the message of the sentence was. The purpose of the repetition, in this case, is to help students remember a definition and act based on that definition. This furthers knowledge, but does it allow students to co-create knowledge? A similar thing can be asked of another exercise in which the students mirror the teacher in reviewing the rules of rounding. In both cases the students have now had another exposure to content rules and perhaps a cute way of remembering information. However, unless these exercises give them the opportunity to co-construct, to interact with this knowledge in a way that is personally relevant to them, they are not useful for empowering the students. As was shown in both mirroring (Excerpt 2) and repeated phrases they can be disempowering to students who deviate from them in class.

**Partner Talk**

Both teachers mentioned that their classrooms were full of talk. The Spanish teacher mentioned that this was hard for her due to her own “strict” educational experience. However, she cited something she read years ago and has used as a model for her classroom. She said that a classroom must be “una casa cantarina”, or “singing house”. Thus, she encourages discussion amongst her students as much as possible (Personal Interview, 15 February 2018).
The English teacher uses Kagan structures to partner her students. Students are partnered with others who are on a different academic level\textsuperscript{13}. For one activity, the teacher may have them discuss with their face partner, the person sitting across from them. For another, they might discuss with their shoulder partner, the person sitting next to them. She cited as an example one student who is very high in comprehension, yet struggles with reading (i.e. In oral discussions he follows along very well and often explains things clearly to struggling classmates. However, he has difficulty reading and comprehending written text.) His shoulder partner therefore might be a student on a slightly lower level for comprehension whom he could help, whereas his face partner would be a higher reader who could help him. She mentioned that when the students are on the rug and discuss with a partner, it is not strategic pairing. Whoever they happen to be sitting by is who they talk to. In these situations, she often provides them opportunities to discuss with multiple partners.

The Spanish teacher uses language to partner students in her class. She tries to get one native Spanish speaker with one native English speaker. In explaining her reasons for doing this, she said that she wants the students who speak English as their L1 to get more chances to hear Spanish “first hand” from those who use it regularly. This is visible in the discussion that occurred from the teacher’s direction in Excerpt 4. Most students had a partner whose L1 was different from their own.

This (language in Excerpt 4) hearkens to “language through learning” of the CLIL language trptic (Coyle, Hood & Marsh, 2010). The “language learned through learning” is spontaneous. It emerges out of need rather than from a pre-planned lesson. As this

language is developed, the instructor is responding not only to the new language of the student, but also to their developing knowledge and self-perception (see van Lier, 2008). Thus, partner talk can, under the right circumstances, more effectively help the teacher to respond to the identity of the student rather than simply the language. This empowers them (agency and individuality are recognized).

It seems that the talk that is open ended is more empowering, rather than the talk that is simply a repetition of directions. Compare the Spanish teacher’s instructions to her class to “Tell your partner what you are going to do every morning” with the instruction to discuss a bar graph that the class created. One asks for a repetition, whereas the other asks for interpretation and explanation. (This is comparable to Bloom’s Taxonomy and scales of Depth of Knowledge.) The students are given the agency and space to discuss their background knowledge on the problem, in this case their experiences in class last year. This aids them in meaning making and they thus become co-creators of the knowledge they are discussing.

Other factors also contribute to the empowerment that comes with this type of interaction. “[E]very perception of the target language is simultaneously an act of self-perception.” (van Lier 2008, p. 177) Thus, as the students are learning their second language, they are learning about themselves and perceiving themselves in a new way. By discussing with peers rather than adults, students likely perceive things differently. A native Spanish speaker for example, who is discussing a subject with a native English speaking peer, may more readily identify with the language and culture being presented. They may more readily integrate that moment into their own lingua-identity than they would talking to an adult. In other words, it is easier for them to picture themselves
having success with the language and culture after talking to a peer (similar age, interests) than it would be talking to an adult (with whom they likely rarely interact outside of school). The adult is in a position of power over the student, whereas the peer may be seen as being on a closer level. In addition, when talking with a peer, the student may be speaking more out of a desire to communicate rather than to impress. This increases their agency in the classroom and thus empowers them (van Lier 2008)\textsuperscript{14}. In addition, they are sharing power with their teacher. They become co-creators of knowledge, co-dependent upon both the teacher and other classmates. This sharing of power further empowers them (Rosborough & McCafferty, 2015).

There is, however, some potential for disempowerment through partner talk. If a student is paired with someone who dominates conversation, they may feel disempowered. This can be especially true of a partnership where the dominant speaker is also more comfortable than the other partner in the language being spoken (Ex: If a Spanish speaker dominates conversations in Spanish). In addition, when the students are given freedom to discuss problems as was shown in Excerpt 4, they may never get around to discussing the problem itself.

When partner talk is considered with the elements from Zammit’s (2011) paper, this practice does not provide an example of poverty discourse. It is intellectually challenging as it requires students to interpret the data, rather than simply copying it. It also invites students to become emotionally involved because they can remember and relate to prior learning. Both of these factors help students to stay focused and active.

\textsuperscript{14}“‘I said this because I wanted to say this’ (rather than because someone asked him or her to (re)produce, repeat, display, or manufacture a linguistic piece for the sake of demonstrating proficiency).” (van Lier, 2008, p. 178).
Conclusion

In this section, I summarize the discussion of the data, as well as provide some drawbacks and suggestions for future study.

This study has attempted to describe poverty and empowerment discourse as it was seen in a dual immersion classroom in Utah. I identified two different tasks or elements of the classroom discourse and discussed their impact on students’ empowerment. Those that promoted agency and autonomy in students were the most empowering.

Mirroring is a largely procedural technique. The findings considered in this study suggest that it provides little empowerment for those who participate in it. It also creates a space for poor discourse. This lack of agency and authenticity makes its use in a classroom where students are learning a second language questionable. In addition to lacking agency and authenticity, it also fails to recognize or address students’ emotions, feelings, identity, and development, all important aspects of language according to Vygotsky.

Partner talk has the potential to empower students, as well as the power to disempower students. When it allows students to exercise agency and experience authenticity, it will empower. When however, it is procedural or pre-scripted, it will disempower and create space for poverty discourse. It will not be challenging, emotionally engaging, nor likely to keep the students active. This can occur when, as happens in whole brain and power teaching, students simply repeat what the teacher said, or are told what they will say to a partner, the agency, authenticity, and challenge is taken away.
Practices such as these that are largely procedural but are used for teaching content are not appropriate for a dual immersion setting such as this. Though they may look engaging, they do not reach the intended purpose of helping students to make meaning with language. Language is a tool for making meaning, and interlocutors are meaning makers. Students involved in learning a second language, especially ELs, will make meaning in whatever situation they are in. They need discourse that is empowering and is not filled with poverty discourse in order to be successful.

Limitations

I recognize that this study has limitations. It was a small study, considering just one school out of 195 dual immersion schools in Utah. It was only five days of the school year. More research could be done including a variety of schools from various settings: more affluent areas, inner city, rural settings, varying populations, etc. In addition, future studies could consider the impact of specific techniques taught by the state for DLI. Dual Immersion educators receive monthly trainings on techniques and skills for the classroom. The skills taught in these trainings would be visible in a greater number of schools and their effects could be compared more easily. Because they are widespread, they may have more of an impact on students across the program.

Implications

This study raises certain questions that need to be given more time and space than is allotted here. One such question is the role of procedural language in content instruction. At the beginning of the year, a teacher will typically push procedures more than content. The first three weeks or so of classroom time is often dedicated to
classroom management: explaining, practicing and establishing procedures. Many teachers often wait until their students have mastered procedures before they begin teaching content. There is definitely a need for procedure and efficiency in the classroom. However, what needs to be considered is the way that content is delivered. This and other studies show that teachers are often so engrained in teaching procedures that when they do start teaching content, they do it procedurally. The openness with which content could be taught is lost in the procedural motions adopted by the teacher and students. This creates serious poverty and empowerment issues. Additional research in this area could show how teachers can break away from the procedures and more effectively teach content. As van Lier (1996) observed, “interaction is the most important element of the curriculum…. [and] must be illuminated so as to avoid a narrow definition leading to superficial communication or even pseudo-communication” (p. 5).

As was mentioned earlier, power imbalances negatively effect social relationships, self-perception, academics, etc. (See Dworin, 2011). These work contrary to the aim of DLI programs which is to empower students with two languages. Thus, teachers must consider whether they are providing their students with the opportunities necessary to become empowered. Part of this is delivering content in a non-procedural way as mentioned above. Another essential part is allowing students agency when expressing themselves in class, as well as authenticity. This requires a flexible class structure based on students rather than the teacher. A sociocultural approach to teaching can provide that as teachers provide students with the tools necessary to co-create

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15 “For one thing, there are many ways of interacting, and it is safe to assume that some will be more beneficial to learning than others” (van Lier, 1996, p.4). Procedures have a place, and it’s not in the content.
knowledge. This co-creation will allow for agency as well as authenticity. It will also address Zammit’s (2011) call for “deep learning experiences that [are] intellectually challenging (highly cognitive), [encourage] students to commit emotionally (highly affective) and [keep] them focused, busy and active (highly operative)” (p. 217) by meeting students in their Zone of Proximal Development.

Further Study

I recently filmed these classrooms for two more days. This will provide more data that can be compared with the original data from the beginning of the school year. The data will provide insights into how student and teachers’ discourse has developed during the year. My hope is that this will provide greater depth to this study and further insights into the benefits and drawbacks of discourse in dual immersion programs. Specifically, I want to see if/how practices such as mirroring have diminished during the year, giving way for more agentive and authentic discourse. This longitudinal piece will be considered in a subsequent paper.

The effect of discourse in dual immersion programs is just one piece of these programs that needs to be considered. My hope is that this study will open a dialogue about other aspects of DLI programs, particularly in Utah, that can be strengthened.

The main focus of this paper has been to discuss poverty and empowerment discourse as it was seen in a DLI classroom. As teachers focus on allowing their students agency to authentically create and express themselves, the purpose of DLI programs will be more readily met. Students will dominate the language more as it meets their individual needs. Students will come to know their peers and their culture by engaging in
rich and empowering dialogue. Teachers will shift their focus to be more on students and their work rather than delivering content through procedures.
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