Two-Way Bilingual Instruction of Third Language Children: Immersion or Submersion?
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Two-way immersion, where language majority and language minority children develop bilingualism together, has grown phenomenally in the U.S\(^1\), even while traditional bilingual education comes increasingly under attack in the current political climate. Two-way immersion is much less threatening to critics who resent having to support special programs for language minority children and who fear that traditional bilingual education improperly fosters ethnic pride. Such critics more willingly tolerate two-way immersion because it benefits language majority children (Crawford, 1999). This tolerance, combined with very strong parent support for two-way programs, has permitted two-way immersion programs to continue and grow where other bilingual programs have been disallowed. Parent support has been key, particularly support from English-speaking parents, because these parents have seized on the value of bilingualism for their children and have the political clout to push for language instruction in public schools.

Occasionally, language majority children, who already speak the socially dominant language (SDL), can be found successfully learning two or more languages in school, such as in Luxembourg (Luxembourgish L1\(^2\) German L2, French L3) and in Canada (English L1, Hebrew and French Lx/Ly). Language minority children who do not speak the SDL when they begin school may face third and fourth language instruction, typically with less successful outcomes. When language minority children must learn an SDL in order to function at the most basic level in school, they are subject to submersion damage (Hernández-Chávez, 1984), and may be at greater risk if there are two or more languages that are socially dominant in a community (Rolstad, 1997).

Submersion damage entails psychological and social effects which can be debilitating to students (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1981). A Turkish child in Luxembourg, for example, is vulnerable to a hierarchy of social judgments in the community which ranks Luxembourgish, German and French relative to each other but all higher than Turkish. These social judgments stand to harm the child’s self-esteem and ethnic identification.

Though still relatively rare, third language (L3) instruction is affecting ever-greater numbers of language minority children in Europe, Canada and the U.S, especially if one includes bidialectalism under the umbrella of bilingualism. While L3 instruction could conceivably lead to multilingualism, such instruction may come at a high psychosocial cost if it engenders alienation in the way that submersion does. To explore the question of whether language minority children are likely to benefit from L3 instruction or to suffer from submersion, I begin by reviewing research of the effects of submersion on self-concept and ethnic identification and submersion’s role in underachievement. I discuss two-way immersion and how it may correspond to immersion, rather than submersion, for L3 children, followed with a discussion of the literature on how L3 instruction affects self-concept and ethnic identification. I then present the design for the current case study of the psychosocial effects of two-way immersion on L3 children, followed by the findings from the study. I

\(^1\) The number of programs has gone from 25 that were created during the 25-year period from 1963 to 1988, to well over 250 programs in 24 states by the end of the year 2000, according to the Center for Applied Linguistics website (www.cal.org).

\(^2\) L1 signifies first language, L2 second language and so forth, while Lx and Ly signifies additional languages without specifying how many languages a speaker already knows.
conclude with an analysis that reinforces the distinction between immersion and submersion, in an attempt to clarify some issues related to positive and negative outcomes in the education of linguistic minorities.

**Distinguishing Submersion from Immersion**

Language majority children thrive in immersion, in part because they add a second language with no threat to their first (Artigal, 1991; Baker, 1993; Campbell, 1984; Genesee, 1983, 1985; Heller, 1994). This additive approach enables language majority children to attain high levels of language proficiency, academic achievement, and psychosocial well-being. By contrast, language minority children who are immersed in the SDL are urged to replace their L1 with the L2; this subtractive approach (Lambert, 1967) is considered by critics “submersion” rather than “immersion.”

In an attempt to draw parallels between the successful French immersion model in Canada and English immersion in the U.S., early proponents of English immersion invented the term “structured English immersion” (SEI), and differentiated this approach from submersion in the following ways: (a) “The immersion teacher understands the home language (L1), and students can address the teacher in the home language…” (Baker & deKanter, 1981, p. 2) and (b) “[The] curriculum must be structured differently from the way the curriculum is structured for monolingual English-speaking students” (Baker & deKanter, 1981, p. 6) since it cannot rely on “prior knowledge of the second language when subject areas are taught” (Baker & deKanter, 1981, p. 6). Besides being bilingual, of course, teachers who provide immersion instruction also require special training in immersion methods (Baker & deKanter, 1981).

These distinctions, though crucial, have not sufficiently influenced either English-only instruction or the decisions of U.S. policy makers and voters, quite visibly in California and Arizona, where bilingual education has recently been outlawed in favor of “structured English immersion.” Proponents of English-only instruction for language minority students in the U.S. prefer the term “structured immersion” to “submersion,” but have failed either to notice or to state that SEI entails quite specific requirements. Hence, few SEI teachers are bilingual, even fewer receive specialized immersion training, and there is little, if any, differentiation of curriculum. Perhaps due in part to the blurring of the distinction between SEI and submersion, English-only instruction has failed to show that it leads to positive academic or psychosocial outcomes (Baker, 1996). Research has shown that even weak forms of bilingual education (BE), such as transitional BE, are superior to submersion (Cummins, 1984, 1991; Greene, 1997; Skutnabb-Kangas, 1981; Ramirez, et al., 1991; Rolstad & Mahoney, in preparation; Willig, 1985).

While language minority children often experience submersion effects in English-only instruction, it is unclear whether we can expect language minority children to experience submersion or immersion when placed in a two-way program. Table 1 outlines some characteristics and expected outcomes from three program types: submersion, transitional BE, and developmental BE, with attention to two-way immersion. In the table, self-concept and ethnic identification are shown to be weakest as a result of submersion and strongest as a result of developmental/two-way BE. Transitional BE falls somewhere in between, depending on program implementation. Tolerance toward other ethnicities and academic performance correspond to these findings.
As I will argue below, an examination of the effects of submersion in terms not only of academic achievement and language proficiency, but also of self-esteem and ethnic identification, can guide us in considering two important issues: whether L3 instruction can be appropriate for language minority children, and how social dominance of the language of instruction may affect language minority education.

**Psychological, Cognitive and Social Effects of Submersion**

Submersion decreases academic performance (Baker, 1996; Cummins, 1984; Ramirez et al., 1991) while also negatively affecting children’s attitudes toward themselves and others. Baetens-Beardsmore (1977) correlates academic underachievement with low self-esteem and social isolation, or “anomie”, among linguistic minorities. However, as Paulston argues, psychological and social effects are more difficult to evaluate and are often neglected (1980, 1992).

It makes a lot more sense also to look at employment figures upon leaving school, figures on drug addiction and alcoholism, suicide rates, and personality disorders, i.e., indicators which
measure the social pathology which accompanies social injustice rather than …[just] language skills (Paulston, 1980:41).

Similarly, Cazabon, Lambert and Hall (1993:21) argue that “to be useful, the evaluation … should look beyond academics and languages to the social and psychological consequences.” Their program evaluation showed that self-concepts were not adversely affected by two-way immersion. Croft and Franco (1983:583) also found that the bilingual program they studied did “significantly promote academic achievement and self-concept among the enrolled pupils” in comparison to Spanish-speaking students who were not enrolled in BE. This suggests that the comparison students were experiencing the negative effects of submersion.

Proponents of submersion argue that denying children the use of their own language should intensify their exposure to English, which is then supposed to enable the children to acquire English more quickly (Rossell & Baker, 1996). To the contrary, however, not only have subtractive bilingual education programs not been successful in speeding English acquisition, they can cause psychological harm to children, with predictably negative consequences for academic and social development. Hernández-Chávez (1984) and Brisk (1998) have ascribed this negative effect in part to the low social status of language minority children, who are not accorded the respect enjoyed by English speakers, and who perceive at a very young age that they and their communities are judged by the larger society to be inferior. Baker (1993:199) notes that

A fast conversion to the majority language stands the chance of doing more harm than good. It denies the child’s skills in the home language, even denies the identity and self-respect of the child itself. Instead of using existing language skills, the “sink or swim” approach attempts to replace those skills. The level of English used in the curriculum may also cause the child to show under-achievement, with consequent demands for more of the same medicine (more English language lessons).

By contrast, when children feel respected and valued in school, they typically develop more positive self-concepts. As Snow (1990:64) asserts,

Schools should be operated in ways that maximize the self-esteem of their students - because it is a worthy goal in itself, but also because students with high self-esteem work harder, learn better, and achieve more. The official recognition of the value of the home language and home culture, through native language instruction, constitutes a major contribution to the maintenance of the self-esteem of language minority children.

When education forces a switch from minority language and culture to the SDL, conflicts can arise that threaten children’s values and sense of self. How these conflicts are handled by the child, under influence from teachers, parents and peers, can strongly affect academic achievement.

While some researchers have argued that children suffer long-term cognitive disabilities as a result of submersion, evidence for this argument is less compelling. Cummins (1980), for example, has supported bilingual education for language minority children on the theoretical basis that lack of exposure to academic language hampers children’s development, an argument based on the existence and role of academic language which is hardly conclusive (Rolstad, 2003). While I join Cummins and others in supporting bilingual education as the most effective model of instruction for language minority children, it seems clear that claims regarding cognitive disability have been largely alarmist (MacSwan & Rolstad, 2003).

Researchers have tied ethnic identity to self-concept (Knight, Garza and Bernal, 1998; Harter, 1983) and even to language learning ability (Fishman, 1991; Schumann, 1978). When the home, the school and the society present children with conflicting values, any changes children undergo in ethnic identification correspondingly affect their self-esteem. Secada & Lightfoot (1993:51) assert that
Pressure for assimilation at the expense of one’s home culture forces young children to make painful personal choices which often affect their self-esteem and, in some cases, their ability to learn English and other academic skills.

Beebe and Giles (1984) suggest that when students perceive language learning as a betrayal of their own language and culture, they are not likely to attain L2 proficiency, nor proficiency in the new culture. It is not clear to what extent L3 children might come to identify with either the minority immersion language and culture or the mainstream language and culture, since their own language and culture are typically not addressed in the two-way curriculum.

Two-Way Immersion

Self-concept and ethnic identification can be enhanced by any form of BE, but two-way immersion is uniquely equipped to promote both pride and tolerance. Pride in language minority students is fostered when they realize that not only is their language useful in school but even language majority children are to learn it. Language minority students further benefit from being identified as experts who can help others learn their language. The growth in mutual respect strengthens students’ level of identification with their own ethnicity while at the same time promoting ethnic tolerance (Lindholm, 1994). These psychological and social benefits are in addition to the well-attested academic and linguistic benefits of two-way immersion (Campbell, 1984; Cazabon, Lambert & Hall, 1993; Freeman, 1998; Lindholm & Fairchild, 1990; Rhodes, Crandall & Christian, 1990).

Two-way programs establish a strong sense of ethnic identification through what Freeman describes as “organized efforts to challenge language prejudice in US schools and their local communities” (1998:10). The success of two-way programs in challenging prejudice is extremely valuable to both groups, while ethnic and linguistic prejudice is effectively combated. It bears repeating that these benefits have been found to come at no cost to academic achievement; indeed, both groups experience academic enrichment (Lindholm & Fairchild, 1990; Christian, Montone, Lindholm & Carranza, 1997). Cautions regarding the quality of the minority language input to native speakers, as raised by Valdés (1997), for example, have not been borne out, likely due to the prevalent overestimation of the nature of academic language and its effects on cognition (Rolstad, in review).

As yet, however, language minority children who do not speak the target minority language have not been encouraged to participate in enrichment immersion programs, perhaps because it is assumed that an L3 context would prove overwhelming to children already facing the difficulties of acquiring the majority language (Secada & Lightfoot, 1993). In their discussion of the successful results of immersion education, Holobow, Genesee and Lambert (1991) emphasize that “these results pertain only to ethnic minority group children who already speak English, and that, therefore, they cannot necessarily be generalized to ethnic minority group children who do not speak English as a first language or who have limited proficiency in English” (1991:196). The current study addresses this issue, as it examines the effects of L3 immersion on students who are members of an ethnic minority group and who entered school speaking languages other than English. A review of the literature on L3 acquisition may prove helpful in clarifying this discussion.

L3 Acquisition

In countries like Belgium, Switzerland and Luxembourg which have three or more official languages, various trilingual education programs can be found, some of which involve language minority, often immigrant, students. Some Turkish students in Holland receive
instruction partially in Turkish (in a pull-out program), but mostly in Dutch submersion through second grade, after which some instruction in French is added. A further complication is experienced by Moroccan children in Holland, who receive little L1 support beyond that of parent volunteer aides in the classroom. These children are exposed to some literacy instruction in standard Arabic, which is not the dialect these children speak (Leman, 1993).

The traditional Luxembourg system provides instruction first in Luxembourgish, which is gradually replaced by German, followed by French. Secondary education is then conducted either in French or in German, depending on the school. This traditional system has been impacted by growing numbers of immigrant children, who learn Luxembourgish with “mitigated results” (Lebrun & Baetens-Beardsmore, 1993) for one year, after which they are mainstreamed into Luxembourgish/German/French classrooms.

It is reported that the European School Model produces bilingual and multilingual students with high levels of interethnic tolerance (Baetens-Beardsmore, 1993; Leman, 1993). One of the most relevant and interesting aspects of this European model for the present study is its emphasis on L2 and L3 acquisition in the company of native-speaking peers, such that all students experience similar feelings of weakness in learning a language in the presence of some of their native-speaking peers and feelings of confidence in serving as a language model for others. Housen and Baetens-Beardsmore (1987) report that this common experience helps the students to bond together, and that it is quite common for students to have as their best friends members of other ethnic and linguistic groups. However, the elite nature of the students makes generalizations toward other populations unreliable.

Research also suggests that bilingualism may have cognitive benefits over monolingualism (Bialystok, 1987; Peal & Lambert, 1962), although the claim has yet to be sufficiently explained in terms of how, or why (Diaz & Klingler, 1991). In addition, bilinguals may have an advantage over monolinguals in learning an L3 (Thomas, 1988). For example, language majority students have been shown to thrive in double immersion programs, where they learn two foreign languages (Genesee, Lambert & Tucker, 1978). In the Basque Autonomous Community, where Basque and Spanish are compulsory subjects, English acquisition is greater among balanced bilinguals (Cenoz, 1996). While Basques and the Basque language have suffered from social stigmatization, its current status as compulsory in schools makes Basque, in some sense, a majority language, more like the situation of Catalonians in Spain (Munoz, 2000). This is in direct contrast to, for example, Spanish speakers in the U.S. Although such studies of trilingualism have begun to appear in the research literature showing that L3 instruction can benefit language majority students, similar research has not been conducted to evaluate the effects of L3 learning in language minority students.

Positive results for ethnic minority children in immersion programs cannot be generalized to provide support for the inclusion of language minority children in immersion programs (Holobow, Genesee and Lambert, 1991). Cases of early trilingualism vary widely (De Houwer, 1995), making generalizations difficult, and leading to a paucity of evidence on which to base decisions regarding L3 instruction for language minority children. The present case study attempts to address this gap in evidence through the design and findings provided below.

**Research Questions**

To address the issue of the suitability of immersion for L3 children, the following research questions were posed:

1. Do language minority children immersed in a third language develop positive self-concepts and ethnic identification?
How do the self-concepts and ethnic identification of language minority children immersed in a third language compare with those of their linguistic and cultural peers at the same school who receive first language support, and with those who receive English-only instruction?

Setting

In the culturally and linguistically diverse schools of Los Angeles’ Koreatown area, the Korean/English Bilingual Immersion Project (KEBIP) was implemented to foster proficiency in Korean and English among both Korean-American and non-Korean-American students. While many immersion and two-way immersion programs are found in areas of higher socioeconomic status, KEBIP is situated in an area of mostly working-class families. Interestingly, while two-way immersion programs in the U.S. typically include monolingual English speakers, the low number of English-only (EO) students in Koreatown has led to the inclusion of L3 speakers in KEBIP. These L3 speakers are native speakers of Spanish or Tagalog, with basic proficiency in English, who undergo Korean immersion in kindergarten alongside native speakers of Korean who receive first language support. The effects of this unusual educational program were studied to determine the students’ levels of self-concept in comparison with those of their cultural and linguistic peers in different programs, namely an English mainstream program and a Spanish bilingual program.

A case study approach to the data was taken, due in part to the low numbers of students involved and to the fact that experimental methods involving random assignment and true controls were not feasible in this context. An intervention case study shows what effects may be attributed to an intervention at a single site, with particular attention to the contextual conditions and the meaning constructed by participants of the experience (Faltis, 1997).

Two cohorts of KEBIP students, the first and second groups of students to participate since the program’s initiation, were studied over a period of four years. The first group, initially consisting of 14 students but currently consisting of 5, has completed the program, which begins in kindergarten and ends after the fifth grade. The second cohort, consisting of 13 students but currently consisting of 3, has completed the fourth grade. The students’ self-concepts were tested with the use of Harter’s (1985) Self-Perception Profile for Children (described below). In a mixture of interview and test format, questions were asked regarding self-concepts in six domains, ranging from perceptions of scholastic and athletic ability to physical appearance. One domain, tested independently from the others, was designed to assess global self-worth.

Ethnic identification was assessed with a survey which asked students to identify and then rate their own ethnicity and then several other ethnicities salient in Koreatown. Items revealed attitudes toward linguistic and cultural features of their own and other ethnic groups.

The KEBIP students’ responses were compared cross-sectionally with those of fourth and fifth grade students at the same school who have participated in a mainstream English program since kindergarten. In addition, the Spanish-speaking students’ scores were compared with those of other Spanish-speaking students who had participated in either a mainstream English program or a Spanish bilingual program. (No corresponding Tagalog bilingual program was offered at the site.) Data were collected to examine levels of self-concept among each of the various ethnic groups (Latino, Filipino, and Korean) and any gender-related differences. Parents were also interviewed to explore their beliefs about ethnic identity, linguistic values and their children’s educational opportunities, for consideration of selection effects.
Instruments

Harter’s (1985) Self-Perception Profile for Children was used to assess children’s self-concepts, related to scholastic competence, social acceptance, athletic competence, physical appearance, behavioral conduct and global self-worth. Ethnic attitudes were tested with a Bipolar Ethnic Attitudes Survey, consisting of a 12-item semantic differential scale, which asked students to judge the characteristics of a given ethnic group, with a five-point bipolar adjective scale. The characteristics assessed were adapted from Lambert and Tucker (1972) and included adjective pairs such as tall/short, nice/mean, and hard-working/lazy. (See Rolstad (1998) for the full text of the Bipolar Ethnic Attitudes Survey.) Each child was provided with four copies of the Survey, the first of which was completed regarding the child’s own ethnicity. The three remaining copies were completed regarding other ethnicities, limited to Black, White, Latino and Korean. Findings from the study, both individual and group outcomes, are provided below, with findings relating to self-concept of KEBIP and comparison student followed by ethnic identification findings.
Self-Concept Findings

Longitudinal data from Harter’s (1985) Self-Perception Profile for Children were collected from the L3 children. These data show that all of the children developed positive self-concepts over the course of their Korean immersion experience (for more detail, see Rolstad, 1998). In fifth grade, the first cohort showed means near or above a medium level (2.5 out of 4) in every self-concept domain measured. In most domains, the means were nearer to 3, while in global self-worth, the mean was 3.4, or medium-high, as shown in Figure 1.

![Figure 1: Self-Perception Profile for 5th Grade KEBIP Subject Population, 1998](image)

Abbreviations: Sch Comp = Scholastic Competence; Social Accept = Social Acceptance; Ath Comp = Athletic Competence; Phy Appear = Physical Appearance; Behavior = Behavioral Conduct.

Thus far, Harter’s instrument has not been widely used with different ethnic and socioeconomic status populations from that of the White, middle-class children for which the instrument was originally designed. Harter (1985) used “low” (=1), “medium” (=2.5) and “high” (=4) on her results scale. The terms “medium-low” and “medium-high,” etc. were added as a slight elaboration of this scheme.
In fourth grade, the second cohort’s mean self-concept scores were higher still, all above the medium range. In global self-worth, their mean score was quite high, at 3.73, as shown in Figure 2.

Among Spanish speakers, the only group for which a three-program comparison was possible, it was found that, of the children who spoke Spanish when they began school, those in the two-way program had fared best after four years. Typically, children who speak some English are mainstreamed into English-only instruction, alongside monolingual English speakers as well as monolingual Tagalog and monolingual Spanish speakers. As can be seen in Figure 2, self-concept among the English-mainstream children was initially higher than that of children in the two-way or the TBE classrooms. However, the scores of the English mainstream children decreased steadily over the four years. The children who, as a group, spoke the least English began lower and ended lower than any other group. The children in the two-way program started out between the other two groups, but their self-concept scores rose steadily, ending substantially above the others’.

Abbreviations: Sch Comp = Scholastic Competence; Social Accept = Social Acceptance; Ath Comp = Athletic Competence; Phy Appear = Physical Appearance; Behavior = Behavioral Conduct.

Figure 2: Self-Perception Profile for 4th Grade KEBIP Subject Population, 1998
These data from Harter’s (1985) Self-Perception Profile show that the L3 children (Latinos, Filipinos and the two children who are of mixed Latino and Filipino ethnicity) show positive self-concepts. A comparison of self-concepts among Spanish speakers in KEBIP and in two other programs shows that the L3 children have self-concepts that are generally more positive than those of the comparison groups.

Ethnic Identification

The L3 KEBIP students in both cohorts included four Latino students, two Filipino students and two students who are half Filipino and half Latino. Ethnic identification findings are provided in Table 2 (for more detail, see Rolstad, 1997 and 1998). The three ethnic groups tested were Latinos, Koreans and Filipinos, and scores are reported within each of these groups according to their educational program. For example, on a scale from 1 to 5, with 5 being most favorable, Latino students in KEBIP rated their attitude toward Blacks at 3.38, the number shown in the upper left corner of the table. Their rating of Koreans was 3.46 and their rating of their own ethnic group, Latinos, was 4.04. From these data, it appears that Latinos in KEBIP have rather high identification with their own ethnic group. Yet their rating of Whites was higher still, an interesting finding. Their rating of Blacks was lowest, at 3.38.

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<th>Attitudes Toward …</th>
<th>Latino Students</th>
<th>Filipino Students</th>
<th>Korean Students</th>
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<td>Spanish BLE</td>
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<td>3.25 (4)</td>
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<td>Whites</td>
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The Filipino KEBIP students rated their own ethnicity, Filipino, quite highly at 4.64. They rated Blacks next highest, followed by Koreans, Latinos, and Whites, each only slightly lower than the previous category. Even Whites, who were rated lowest, received a rating of just under 4.4.

The two students who are half Filipino and half Latino are brother and sister and referred to themselves as “Fil-Mex.” (These students’ results are not included in Table 2, as there was no comparison group.) While the brother maintained the Fil-Mex label for the Survey, the sister identified her ethnicity as Filipino for this task (although in other contexts she also called herself Fil-Mex). The brother rated Fil-Mex people at 4, followed by White people at 3.9, and Korean people at just over 3. The sister rated her Filipino ethnicity at 5, and gave the same 5-point rating to Korean people. This was followed by her rating of Latinos at just over 4.1, of Whites at 3.5, and of Blacks at 2.

The averaged data collected from the L3 KEBIP students show that they rated their own ethnicities at 4.64, while rating other ethnic groups slightly lower. They rated Blacks and Koreans at 3.98, and Whites at 4.38. Overall, the L3 students appear to identify well with their own ethnic groups, and view other ethnic groups fairly favorably as well.

Among comparison students, Latinos in the English mainstream class rated their own ethnicity at 3.26, lower than their ratings of both Whites (3.39) and Koreans (3.43), and nearly equal to their rating of Blacks (3.25). Interestingly, the Latinos in the English mainstream class also rated their own ethnicity almost a full point lower than did the Latinos in the Spanish bilingual program and 0.78 lower than the Latinos in the KEBIP program. This finding suggests that, among Latinos, ethnic identification was strongest for children in the program that supported their primary language and was next strongest for children in the two-way program. It would be interesting if a similar comparison could be made with the Filipino children but, unfortunately, the school provided no bilingual program for Filipinos. The Filipinos in the English mainstream program rated their own ethnicity at 3.89, which is .75 lower than the Filipino KEBIP students’ own group rating of 4.64. The English mainstream Filipino students’ own group rating was equal to their rating of Whites, with Koreans receiving the next highest rating (3.43), followed by Blacks (3.31).

There were no “Fil-Mex” students available for comparison with the KEBIP students. However, it is interesting to note the responses of other children of mixed ethnicity who are in the English mainstream program. One child was Chinese and Latina, according to her parents, but identified herself as Chinese and American. She was asked to fill out surveys rating her attitudes toward Chinese people, and toward Blacks, Koreans, and Whites. She rated Chinese people at just under 3.0, while she rated Whites at over 3.8. It was interesting that many of the children tested for this study seemed to equate American with White, and it may be that this child was identifying herself with Whites in this task. If so, it may be that the White category more accurately reflects her attitudes toward her own ethnicity. This child rated Koreans only slightly below Whites, and Blacks slightly below Chinese.

Another child, Indonesian and White according to his teacher, identified his ethnicity as “Indonesian and American.” His rating of people who are Indonesian and American was 4.0, but was exceeded by his rating of Whites, at 4.7. Again, it is possible that he equated American with White, as many children seemed to do. This response may reflect his self-identification with Whites, separately from his self-identification with people who are “Indonesian and American,” especially since he is half White. He rated Blacks at 3.3 and Koreans at 3.7.
The third English mainstream child of mixed ethnicity was Latina and White. She rated Hispanics at 3.3, and Whites at 4.0. Her rating of Blacks was 3.6, while her rating of Koreans was 2.5.

The last child studied for consideration of mixed ethnicity responses reported that she was Black, Chinese, Filipino, Spanish and American. Whereas other children of mixed ethnicity often focused on one of their ethnic components for this task, this child did not state whether she had focused on one ethnic group or on her particular ethnic blend. She rated people of her own ethnicity (presumably other people who are Black, Chinese, Filipino, Spanish and American) at just over 4.8, and then rated Blacks separately at 5.0. Her rating of Whites was 4.10, followed by her rating of Koreans at 3.0.

It was difficult to determine what approach to take with children of mixed ethnic backgrounds. A choice needed to made whether to test each part of their ethnic background separately, have them choose which ethnicity they identified with most strongly and test only that one, or try to blend the ethnicities together and test the children’s identification with others of precisely that ethnic blend. Each of these possibilities was problematic; it was left as much as possible to the individual child to choose his or her own approach. Regardless of the approach taken, it is difficult to make broad generalizations about the levels of ethnic identification of these children.

The Latino KEBIP students rate their own ethnicity slightly lower (at 4.04) than do the Latino students in the Spanish bilingual program (at 4.20), but higher than do the Latino students in the English mainstream program (at 3.26). This finding is congruent with what one might expect in terms of the promotion of ethnic identification in the three programs. The strongest identification would be expected in the program that most supports the home language, in this case, the Spanish bilingual program. Findings from the other two programs are interesting because the weakest identification would be expected in the program that least supports the home language. Since neither KEBIP nor the English mainstream program supports the home language of the L3 students, neither can be predicted to rank above the other, yet results show that KEBIP students did outrank English mainstream students in ethnic identification.

The fact that the KEBIP program students showed higher ethnic identification suggests that third language immersion may support the L3 children in their ethnic identification in some way that the English mainstream program does not. That the Filipino KEBIP students rated their own ethnicity higher (at 4.64) than the Filipino students in the English mainstream program rated theirs (at 3.89) reinforces this interpretation. The two KEBIP students who are half Filipino and half Mexican rated their own ethnicity at 4 (George) and at 5 (Laura) and, while it is difficult to know with whom these students should be compared, their levels of ethnic identification are high. In comparison with Latino students, George scored virtually equal with the other Latinos in KEBIP. With respect to the other Filipinos in KEBIP, his score was somewhat lower, although still higher than the mean of Filipino children in the English mainstream class. Laura, on the other hand, outscored all of the children in all of the programs with her score of 5. Thus, the data from these two children also support the claim that L3 KEBIP students can be expected to outscore English mainstream program students in strength of ethnic identification. These findings suggest that L3 immersion may foster positive ethnic identification among L3 children, even when their ethnicity is not addressed in the curriculum.

It is also interesting to examine the scores of Korean students in KEBIP and in the English mainstream program. In KEBIP, the Korean students scored a mean of 3.82 on level of ethnic identification, lower than the Korean students in the English mainstream program, who scored 4.23. Thus, the Korean KEBIP students scored lower in ethnic identification than the L3 KEBIP students, as well as lower than the Korean students in the English mainstream program. This is a fascinating result given the emphasis on Korean language and culture in
the Korean/English immersion program. Their rating of Whites was just slightly lower than their self-rating, at 4.21. Their rating of Latinos was 3.67, followed by their rating of Blacks at 3.63.

The construct of ethnicity, particularly the component of ethnic constancy (the idea that ethnicity cannot change over time), suffers when viewed from the perspective of one accustomed to life in a multicultural environment, as these children are. Their experiences influence their understanding of, and ideas about, ethnicity, blurring boundaries in such a way that may render traditional notions of ethnicity obsolete. In the psychological research literature, ethnic constancy is used as a milestone, a developmental marker, wherein, at one point, a child may believe that, while now Black, he or she may grow up to be White; with maturity comes the understanding that this will not happen. However, it stands to reason that, because race and ethnicity are socially constructed, these children may realize that there is actually considerable leeway in that construction, and therefore that ethnicity is not as constant as believed. It is not unreasonable for them to think that starting out Latino does not necessarily preclude becoming White, for example, particularly if the child is unable, or unwilling, to speak Spanish. It is sometimes difficult to determine whether, as children, their ideas have not yet developed sufficiently to more closely conform to adult understandings, or whether, as multicultural people growing up in their specific, diverse environment, they have a more differentiated, perhaps more sophisticated, grasp of the meanings of ethnicity than any mature outsider could have.

In any case, with respect to the aspects of ethnic identification assessed by means of the Bipolar Ethnic Attitudes Survey, the L3 children were not found to exhibit lesser identification with their own ethnic groups than with others. In fact, the L3 children’s levels of ethnic identification are shown to compare favorably with those of children in other programs. The Latino KEBIP children’s ethnic identification was stronger than that of the Latino children in the English mainstream class, although not as strong as that of the Spanish bilingual program students. The Filipino KEBIP students’ ethnic identification was stronger than the Filipino students in the English mainstream program.

Limitations of the Study

Due to the small numbers of L3 children involved in this study, a case study approach was taken in interpreting the findings. Each case involving L3 instruction is idiosyncratic in some way, so that while generalization to other populations of L3 children is not advisable, the goal of this study has been to present evidence in such a way that generalizations can be made by the reader, always keeping in mind the submersion/immersion distinction. Since no data on initial English proficiency were available, it is unclear what level of English the children possessed at the outset; hence, generalizations should not be made regarding the immersion of children with zero proficiency in the SDL.

Observations of student interactions, which would have enhanced this study immensely, were not possible due to the nature of the school’s year-round track system which maintains program separation. The issue of selection effects, a significant one in studies of voluntary programs such as two-way immersion, was mitigated by the assignment of children to the KEBIP program by the school principal, in some cases only after overcoming parents’ initial reservations. Assignments were loosely based on the principal’s informal assessment of children’s English proficiency when they enrolled in kindergarten. Once in school, seven of the L3 KEBIP students tested at 25/25 on the Student Oral Language Observation Matrix (SOLOM), a measure based on teacher judgment, and either functional or fluent on the Pre-Language Assessment Scales (Pre-LAS). One child, Randall, was evaluated as non-functional in English on the Pre-LAS, but scored 20/25 on the SOLOM. Given that the principal had
okayed his participation, it is more likely that he did have some proficiency in English, and that the Pre-LAS is a less valid instrument for measuring low proficiency.

Interviews were conducted with KEBIP and comparison parents to explore whether differences in English proficiency, educational and occupational background could be found that might have affected student outcomes. The interviews revealed that KEBIP parents were quite similar to English mainstream parents, while the parents of children in the Spanish bilingual program rated somewhat lower in these areas. The reported socioeconomic status differences were not great, nor were any interesting differences in ethnic attitudes or values among the KEBIP parents found that might have affected their children’s levels of ethnic identification, beyond their fact willingness to have their children participate in the L3 program.

Thus, while the L3 KEBIP students may have differed slightly from their peers in ways predicted by their being selected for the program, they did not seem to differ in any interesting way from the English mainstream students, who were placed according to similar criteria. The heavy U.S. emphasis on transitional use of the L1 effectively prevents any child with the most basic English proficiency from being placed in traditional BE and pushes English mainstreaming of many children with no English proficiency at all. Thus, while KEBIP children were selected based on their having considerable English proficiency upon starting school, selection effects appear to be negligible.

Conclusions

While research has shown the foreign language immersion of language majority children to be highly successful, the immersion of language minority children in the majority language has been shown to be far less successful and often detrimental. Immersing language minority children in the SDL can lead to “submersion damage,” instantiated by negative effects on children’s self-concepts, ethnic identification, academic progress and language proficiency. How can we explain this difference in the outcomes for language majority and language minority children of what seems to be a similar program? Researchers have attempted to explain this apparent paradox through hypotheses of linguistic deficits on the part of language minority children, but such hypotheses have not been well supported under careful scrutiny (Baral, 1980; Edelsky, Hudelson, Flores, Barkin, Altwerger & Jilbert, 1983; MacSwan, 2000; MacSwan & Rolstad, 2003; Martin-Jones & Romaine, 1986; Rolstad, 2003). The feasibility of L3 immersion for language minority students has not been established, in part because the causes of submersion damage are not well understood.

This study examines the effects of Korean/English two-way immersion on L3 speakers who received no first language support, and includes assessments of self-concept and ethnic identification. Besides attaining high levels of academic success and English language development (see Rolstad, 1997, 1998), the L3 children developed positive self-concepts and ethnic identification. In this case, L3 immersion appears to have had no detrimental effects on the children’s self-concepts, levels of ethnic identification, academic achievement or linguistic development in comparison with other language minority children in other programs, with the exception that they have not developed, or in some cases, have lost, their first language proficiency, unlike the children enrolled in the Spanish bilingual program. The L3 children appear to be developing normally in each of the areas studied and there is no reason to expect that they will not continue to do so. The self-concept results are congruent with Lindholm and Fairchild’s (1990) findings that the two-way immersion children they studied had high levels of perceived competence and acceptance.

It must be noted that the L3 children studied here were claimed, for the most part, to have been proficient in English when they enrolled in the program, although no support for this
claim was available. Proficiency in the majority language may lead to heightened sociolinguistic status, which in turn is likely to improve the chances for success of language minority children in a program that does not support their first language. It is unclear whether L3 immersion is feasible among children who have no proficiency in the majority language, since these children are most likely to suffer from SDL submersion. The results of the study suggest that educational enrichment may be possible for language minority students who have basic proficiency in English, even in the absence of first language support, provided that the language of immersion is not that of the dominant society. While it might be assumed that L3 immersion would constitute an overwhelming burden to language minority students, this study provides tentative evidence that L3 immersion may not be detrimental, and may be beneficial to language minority students, at least when they have basic proficiency in the majority language.

Indeed, several questions should be addressed before we can conclude that L3 immersion may be suitable for children who lack proficiency in the majority language. First, what is the difference in sociolinguistic status between language minority children who are proficient in the majority language and language minority children who are not? Second, what are the effects of immersion in various minority languages that may be differentially dominant in communities within the larger society? In other words, as Campbell (1984) points out, while both groups constitute linguistic minorities in the larger society, Spanish speakers in Culver City, California, have different sociolinguistic status from French speakers in Quebec. Similarly, Korean speakers in Koreatown may have more or less status than each of these other groups in their respective communities, and more or less status than other minority language groups in Koreatown. This community-level difference in status may well affect the immersion outcomes among students from various language minority groups.

In order to strengthen the case for using data on self-concept collected by means of Harter’s (1985) instrument, several studies would prove useful. A longitudinal study, following students through high school, that examines the development of self-concept in students enrolled in a variety of programs could provide a baseline for comparison of the effects of L3 immersion. A study of the possible cross-validation of self-concept and ethnic identification assessments would also be very helpful for evaluation of student outcomes. In addition, further research in the area of ethnic identification among language minority students in bilingual and mainstream programs and research into the ethnic identification of language majority students in immersion programs would be useful for determining the differential effects of L3 immersion on language minority students.

Since the L3 children’s experience did not result in the negative outcomes typically associated with submersion damage, such as low self-esteem, lack of ethnic identification and decreased academic achievement, this study provides some evidence that submersion damage is linked to sociolinguistic status and may be linked to instruction in the socially-dominant language rather than to neglect of the first language. However, the children’s level of English proficiency when starting school provides an alternative explanation. Regardless, the study provides an in-depth examination of several aspects of an experimental program, presenting findings that contribute to the very limited amount of data available on the immersion of L3 students. Further studies of L3 immersion programs, while they must be entirely voluntary, would aid tremendously in substantiating the claim that such programs can provide an enrichment form of education for language minority students.

References


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