

Abstract

100 words

This article reports a qualitative study of the reasons mothers chose a Spanish/English Two-Way Immersion Program for their children in Central Texas. Some of the mothers' reasons varied and others overlap. All mothers expressed the belief that the program would provide their children with more opportunities, cognitive benefits, and an increased ability to communicate, confirming earlier studies. The qualitative nature of this study allows for a more in-depth and nuanced look at the reasons why parents from varying backgrounds chose to enroll their children in a Spanish/English TWI program.

Key Words

Families, Mothers, Two-Way Immersion, Dual Language, Elementary Education

Mothers Choose:

Reasons for Enrolling their Children in a Two-Way Immersion Program

Recent demographic shifts in the population of schoolchildren in the United States have been extensively documented in the research literature. Every year there are larger numbers of immigrants and emergent bilinguals¹ in schools across the country and for most of them, the overwhelming experience in schools is a subtractive one (Valenzuela, 1999). Increasingly, emergent bilinguals are forced to undergo native language loss and are pushed towards English and away from bilingualism. Yet there are a growing number of educators and parents who reject the subtractive paradigm of pushing students towards English at all costs. One educational option based on an ideology of linguistic pluralism where multiple languages are supported and taught is Two-Way Immersion (TWI), also called Dual Language. These programs encourage bilingualism and biliteracy through sustained bilingual instruction for both language minority and language majority students. Most TWI programs share certain characteristics. First, the population of students includes English speakers and speakers of another language (usually Spanish). These two groups study together most of the day, if not all, and students learn language through academic content instruction in both languages. In addition, a central goal is that every student becomes proficient in using two languages for communication and learning. In order to meet this goal, students must spend time in the program; most programs require that families commit to attend for at least five years (Lindholm-Leary, 2001).

Nationally, Two-Way Immersion (TWI) programs are growing exponentially. In 2000, there were 248 TWI programs in 23 states and DC; in 2012 there were 415 programs in 31 states

¹ “Emergent bilinguals” (Garcia, Kleifgen, & Falchi, 2008) is the term I will use in this article in order to avoid discounting the home languages and cultural and linguistic understandings emergent bilinguals bring with them to school.

(Center for Applied Linguistics, 2012). This is an increase in reported programs at a rate of almost 14% per year. Multiple factors have contributed to the growth of TWI programs, among them research studies showing TWI to be additive bilingual spaces where the majority of students perform at or above the levels of their non-participant peers (Alanís, 2000; Delgado-Gaitan, 2004; Epstein, 2001; Thomas & Collier, 2002). Parents of students of these children help the programs grow, flourish and maintain sustainability (Alanís & Rodriguez, 2008; Parkes & Ruth, 2011).

Empirical studies show that a key factor in the early popularity and success of Two-Way Immersion programs has been the support of parents who desire language education for their children (Craig, 1996). Moreover, parents are integral to the success of TWI programs. Parent support can take many forms including putting pressure on local school districts to begin and maintain programs, enrolling their own children in the program, and spreading their positive experiences through word of mouth. More recently, an additional factor contributing to the growth of TWI includes the loopholes for such programs in states that have outlawed bilingual education. California was one of the first states to ban bilingual education after Proposition 227. Bilingual programs were allowed only after parents and guardians requested a waiver to select bilingual education in various program formats (Amaral, 2001; García, 2000). Essentially, informed and organized parents could select bilingual instruction for their children. Otherwise, their children were taught in English (Amaral, 2001). Recently the Center for Applied Linguistics listed 133 TWI schools in California in their directory (CAL, 2012), showing that programs continue there. Similarly, in Arizona and Massachusetts, bilingual education was eliminated after 2001 and 2002 state referendums and all emergent bilinguals were required to be placed in Sheltered Instruction in English. Yet Two-Way Immersion (TWI) programs still exist

in these states, in part because the few schools that offer TWI are specialized and parents have chosen them (Eaton, 2012; Morales & Aldana, 2010).

Even in states that have maintained bilingual education, such as Texas where this study was conducted, TWI programs are voluntary and a school district must obtain written parental approval for student participation in the program (Texas Education Agency, 2007). The programs are generally strands within a school but even when the entire school participates in the model, it is almost always a magnet or choice school. In a study of TWI programs in Colorado, more than 80% of parents indicated they were given a choice to enroll in the program (Shannon & Millian, 2002). In addition, some programs have become highly sought after, creating the need for lotteries or other selection criteria (such as attendance at informational meetings as a requirement to participate in the program or to have a chance at the lottery) to manage the number of participants and maintain a balance of language backgrounds (Center for Applied Linguistics, 2012). For these reasons, parents' perceptions and rationale for enrollment are a critical component to the sustainability and success of TWI programs and merits further study. This research focuses on parents' rationales for choosing a Spanish/English TWI program for their children.

Literature Review

There are several studies of parents' perspectives of Spanish/English TWI programs and the majority use survey data. In one of the first documented studies on parents and TWI, Craig (1996), surveyed parents in a large metropolitan area on the East Coast who chose a Spanish/English program for their children. All parents agreed that bilingualism was important but there were differences between the two groups (designated as learning or choosing to use Spanish first vs. English first) when it came to reasons for enrollment. The Spanish first parents

cited language and cultural maintenance as the strongest reasons for TWI. While they desired that their children maintain the ability to communicate with their families, they also cited goals related to the larger sociolinguistic landscape such as a wider ability to understand and communicate with Latinos and to instill a sense of pride in their community. The third most common reason cited was increased future job opportunities. The English first parents were interested in their children becoming bilingual, but cited reasons such as developing positive attitudes towards linguistic and cultural diversity as well as intellectual stimulation as important factors in the TWI program. Second most important was early language acquisition and third was increased future job opportunities. According to Craig (1996), both groups of parents saw the program as benefitting two distinct groups of students and families.

Lindholm-Leary (2001) created a survey for TWI parents and found that all parents in her California sample supported bilingualism and were uniformly positive about the program, regardless of language background. Yet there were some important differences among participants, mainly based on ethnic heritage rather than language dominance. Parents who were Latina/o, regardless of the language they spoke, expressed an interest in either maintaining or reclaiming their language, in many ways to maintain their cultural and ethnic ties to the community. Lindholm-Leary's (2001) study also points to the fact that parents might have different attitudes towards bilingualism and different reasons for enrolling their children in TWI, depending not only on their language, but also educational and socioeconomic backgrounds.

In a time that bilingual education was under attack in Colorado, Shannon and Milian (2002) surveyed parents after concerns TWI programs may no longer be available across the state. Their data, collected from over 55% of parents whose children were enrolled in TWI programs statewide, showed the top three reasons for enrolling in the program include value and

benefits of bilingualism, future benefits and opportunities, and the importance of maintaining bilingual, biliterate, and bicultural competencies. These parents in Colorado overwhelmingly supported the programs. This study suggests that parents are an important factor in not only creating and implementing TWI programs, but in contributing to the sustainability of them in the wake of political movements against bilingual education through their own political actions and support.

Using the survey created by Lindholm-Leary (2001), Ramos (2007) examined why parents chose a TWI program in South Florida. He also documented their views and support of Spanish. He reports responses from 336 parents, the majority of whom were mothers. However, parents were not asked to elaborate on their responses nor was data desegregated by language backgrounds of the families. Parents ranked their top three reasons for enrollment and close to a third cited a bilingual/bicultural identity as their first reason for enrolling their children in TWI. Because the data was collected using a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire and there were no elaborations made by parents, we cannot understand their reasoning further. The author speculated that parents appreciated the additive approach towards languages at the school and this informed their first choice of a bilingual/bicultural identity. The second most cited response was academic or career advantages, very closely followed by the pragmatic reason that this was their neighborhood school. The parents also chose the program because they wanted their children to be able to communicate with other Spanish speakers and recognized the high quality (Shannon & Millian, 2002). Overall, parents showed very strong support of the program and its goals.

In Southern California, Giacchino-Baker and Piller (2006) surveyed and interviewed parents regarding their motivation for enrolling children in the program, their support, and

commitment levels of a Two-Way Immersion program in its second year of implementation.

They found that while the reasons parents enrolled their children were complex, the most salient rationale was the desire for their children to become biliterate—to read and write in English and Spanish. Other reasons (in order of importance according to their survey) include the need to be proficient in English and other languages in the US, increased job opportunities, ability for their child to speak Spanish and English, preserving a home language, and the ability of children to translate. In their sample, parents from both “English first” and “Spanish first” families cited the importance of speaking languages other than English in the US and being bilingual. And while all parents agreed that biliteracy was important, the Spanish first families cited biliteracy and increased job opportunities at much higher rates than the English first families. Combining follow up interviews with survey data allowed Giacchino-Baker and Piller (2006) to uncover additional rationales and nuances in parent perspectives. First, four of five English first parents discussed the school and teachers’ excellent reputations as important factors in their choice to enroll their children in TWI. Moreover, some Spanish first parents explained how the school was located outside of their neighborhood but because of the program and its excellent reputation, they were willing to make sacrifices to have their children in the TWI program. In addition, the Spanish first parents explained that their bilingual aspirations for their children had been in place for a long time, in one case the mother describes how she fostered bilingualism with her daughter in utero by playing English tapes in as well as speaking to her daughter in Spanish so she would hear both languages even before she was born. This is also related to the idea that language and culture are intricately tied, as Spanish first parents described their hopes that their children would be able to communicate with extended family members and would understand their culture better.

Gerena (2010) reported parental voice and motivation regarding a 50/50 program in New York in its second year of implementation. Her study of fifteen parents who participated in focus groups shows that parents chose the program for increased opportunities and better relationships, both on a global scale and within the community and their own families. Spanish-speaking parents also cited the desire to strengthen family ties by maintaining their language and culture. Her study notes that despite both groups of parents voicing strong support for TWI, it was the English-speaking community at large that did not support the program and therefore the English-speaking parents took up roles of activism to promote it and fight against misconceptions of bilingualism.

These studies of TWI programs across the United States (two in California, one in New York, another in Florida, one identified only as on the “East Coast” and another in Colorado) indicate that both Spanish and English dominant parents overwhelmingly support the programs and would recommend them to others. Because participation in TWI programs is almost exclusively voluntary, parents are generally a self-selected group who view bilingualism favorably, so this finding is not surprising. Moreover, many of these studies relied primarily on survey data for their findings (all but the Giacchino-Baker and Piller study which used survey and follow up interviews). The current study adds to this growing scientific research of parents’ choices of TWI programs by using semi-structured interviews to provide a more in-depth account of why parents from various ethnic, linguistic, immigrant, and socioeconomic backgrounds enroll their children in TWI programs despite widespread hostility towards bilingual education. In addition, this study was conducted in a context previously absent from the research literature of TWI and parent choice. It is surprising that there are few studies of this topic in Texas due to the high number of TWI programs in Texas and other research studies of

TWI programs across the state.

Research Methods

The purpose of this study is to better understand why parents choose to enroll their children in Two-Way Immersion programs. The type of program is important to this study due to the heterogeneous makeup of participants. Traditional bilingual programs are meant to increase the English proficiency of emergent bilinguals and do not include English proficient students or their parents. Two-Way Immersion programs are different in their goals and characteristics—including both emergent bilinguals and English proficient students (Lindholm-Leary, 2001). This research deliberately includes families who are proficient in Spanish, English, and/or bilingual. The study focuses on five mothers from various language and socioeconomic backgrounds and their rationales for enrolling their children in a Spanish/English Two-Way Immersion program in Central Texas. Accordingly, the following research question served to guide this study:

- What factors do mothers cite as having an impact on their decision to enroll their children in Two-Way Immersion?

The data shared here is part of a larger mixed methods study on language ideologies and TWI programs in a Central Texas public school district.

Context

This study was conducted in a small city of just over 47,000 residents (US Census update, 2005) located in Central Texas. The city is in a growing corridor, sandwiched between two large cities of over a million inhabitants each. Historically, Shoals Creek (pseudonym) was a German enclave with a majority white population. In fact, the city prides itself on its German heritage and promotes it intensely. Because of this image as a German town, outsiders are often

surprised to learn that the actual population is different from the myth. Currently, the population of Shoals Creek consists of roughly one third of the inhabitants as citing German ancestry and an equal amount as Latino/a of any race. Of the city's inhabitants, 93.4 % were born in the United States. Of the population age five and over, 70.5 percent speak English only at home with 29.5% speaking Spanish. Of those who speak Spanish, over ten percent cite that they also speak English very well (US Census, 2000). Just over three percent of the population indicates that they speak German as a second language (US Census, 2000) and there is a local movement for studying and preserving what some have called "Texas German" (Texas German Dialect Project, 2006).

The educational history of Shoals Creek is also important in that its schools were not only some of the first public schools in the state of Texas, but were forerunners in Bilingual Education, albeit in German and English. According to Kloss (cited in Crawford, 1998), Shoals Creek established the first public schools in Texas and these schools were conducted primarily in German. This is a history that citizens are proud of and contribute to the status of Shoals Creek as a German settlement. However, the modern reality points to a more diverse city where Spanish is spoken by more of the inhabitants. This often leads to tensions between long-time residents and newcomers, those who want to maintain the old ways and those who look for innovation.

In this small city there are two public school districts. At the time of the study, the district where these mothers enrolled their children had the only TWI program in the area and served approximately 6,000 students. The district and school where this 90/10 Spanish/English TWI program was offered also had a traditional Bilingual Education program that roughly followed a maintenance model (Genesee, 1999). In other words, these parents were able to choose from the TWI program, a maintenance model of Bilingual Education, or a monolingual

English class for their children. The school that housed the TWI program served almost 700 students in the early childhood grade levels of Pre-Kindergarten, Kindergarten and First exclusively. The TWI program began in Kindergarten. There were two TWI classes and one Bilingual Education class at both grade levels with an additional 14 mainstream English classes at the Kindergarten level and 10 mainstream English classes in First Grade. The mothers who participated in this study all had children who were enrolled in the TWI program at the time of the study.

Data Sources and Analysis

Data for this study are composed of semi-structured interviews (Merriam, 1997) as a means to explore mothers' rationales for enrolling their children in the TWI program. Data was gathered during the 2006-2007 school year when their children were in the First Grade (some had older or younger children as well). I conducted interviews with mothers whose children were actively participating in an established (the program had operated for five years or more) Spanish/English 90/10 Two-Way Immersion program at Presidio Elementary (all names used here are pseudonyms). The interviews were conducted in the language of choice of the mother. Data was transcribed and translated using a commercial bilingual transcription service and reviewed by two bilingual colleagues and myself. I began data analysis with an open coding scheme according to Strauss and Corbin (1998). Through open coding, I identified potential themes by culling out examples from the interviews. All data was broken into data chunks and grouped by emerging themes around why mothers chose the TWI program. When concepts and categories developed that were similar, typologies were created according to a three-step process outlined by Berg (2004). First, I assessed the data and categories or themes that emerged. Then,

I made sure that all the elements were accounted for. Finally, I examined the categories and their contents and drew conclusions from these categories.

Participants

After unsuccessfully attempting to recruit parents through written correspondence in the initial stages of this study, I opted for a personal approach to recruit participants. When I encountered parents volunteering at the school, picking up their children, or attending a meeting, I approached them and introduced myself along with a request to interview them. This method was successful, and I was able to interview eight mothers recruited this way. Although I was interested in interviewing more fathers, I only talked informally to two fathers and because I interviewed the women during the day, the fathers were not present. I relied on the women reporting their husband's viewpoints. While this gave me some insight into the family's decision-making process, I focus on the women's perspectives as they were my informants. Additionally, empirical work on children and their families points to the importance of mothers as the parent more likely to be actively involved in children's schooling and caretaking (Lareau, 2000). Seminal work on Spanish speaking children and their language habits also highlights the important role of mothers. Zentella (1997) describes women from linguistically subjugated communities as those with the most responsibility for language maintenance. For many young children, mothers hold powerful influences on their attitudes for language learning (Brisk & Harrington, 2000; González, 2001) and lay an important foundation for a child to becoming bilingual (Valdéz, 2005).

Of the eight mothers interviewed, I decided to focus on the five mothers described here primarily because their children were participants in a larger mixed methods study of language ideologies and TWI programs. During the larger study I collected additional data on these five

families and discussed the relationships between the children's language ideologies and those expressed by the mothers (Author, 2008). I also focused on these five mothers because they represent a spectrum of experiences and backgrounds. Three of the mothers were native Spanish speakers and two were native English speakers. Some salient characteristics of their backgrounds and experiences are outlined in Table 1. This table is modeled in some ways on Hornberger's (1989) continua of biliteracy. In this case however, the continuum ranges from monolingual Spanish to bilingual to monolingual English. If this group of parents were to be placed on the continua of biliteracy according to Hornberger, Azucena's household would be the most bilingual with the homes of Kathy and Marisol at the opposite end as the least bilingual or most monolingual, although in English and Spanish respectively. This points to the differences not only across groups, but also within groups. It is important to recognize not only the variation in the English-speaking households but in the Spanish-speaking households as well (González, 2001). Accordingly, students and their families may have various reasons for enrolling in Two-Way Immersion programs as well as views on what the benefits and drawbacks of such programs can be.

INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

These data show how the participants in this study varied widely according to socioeconomic, educational, ethnic and linguistic backgrounds. The five families represent a spectrum of life experiences and perspectives present in the Two-Way Immersion program at Presidio Primary. Table 1 provides an overview of this variance that can be viewed along a continuum from monolingual Spanish home settings to monolingual English homes. The mothers' educational backgrounds, citizenship and socioeconomic status all appear to be related. The lower their educational levels, the lower their socioeconomic status and vice versa. The

educational backgrounds ranged from limited education to a college degree. Two of the mothers were born here in the United States and are citizens, one was married to a citizen and two mothers were undocumented immigrants. In these cases, their educational and immigrant backgrounds are reflected in their socioeconomic status. The women with the lowest education and socioeconomic status were also undocumented immigrants whereas the women with higher socioeconomic status had attained a higher level of education and are U.S. citizens.

Overall reported language use in the home, however, appeared to be influenced most by the language backgrounds of family members. The two families who reported the most bilingual language use are those of Azucena and Debbie, the two families with the most linguistic diversity amongst the parents and grandparents. The two families on opposite ends of the continua were quite monolingual. Marisol's family used Spanish almost exclusively in the home; Kathy's family used nearly all English. Ester's family spoke slightly more English than Marisol's family but still was dominated by Spanish. Azucena's family used more Spanish than English but was beginning to use English at home in order to help their children with schoolwork. Debbie's immediate family used English exclusively but the children spent a great deal of time with both grandparents who encouraged the children to engage in more Spanish. The labels used for language use and linguistic proficiency are problematic and often do not account for hybrid language use or varying areas of competency. Because of the contested nature of describing language proficiency, for this study I have chosen to use the term Spanish first or English first to describe the mothers' first and (in all of these cases) most dominant language, following the example of Giacchino-Baker and Piller (2006).

Findings

One of the first questions I posed to the mothers in interviews (see Appendix for interview protocol) was why they had chosen the Two-Way Immersion program for their children. Two-Way Immersion programs have grown significantly in recent years (Center for Applied Linguistics, 2012) and are highly regarded additive bilingual programs (Thomas & Collier, 1997, 2002). Moreover, Texas is a state where TWI programs have been growing over the past two decades, yet there has been little research conducted on parents' views of the programs in Texas. Thus, I was interested in finding out why the parents in this particular community in Central Texas decided to enroll their children. Despite exponential growth, TWI nevertheless represents a very small percentage of the available school options nationwide. At the time of the study, Presidio Primary, along with the two schools it feeds into, was the only TWI program option in this entire school district of over 6000 students. In addition, at the time of the study the three neighboring school districts did not offer a TWI program, although they did offer transitional bilingual education as required by Texas law (Texas Education Agency, 2007). So what influenced these parents choose to enroll their children in the Two-Way Immersion program at Presidio Elementary? What motivated or inspired them to make this important choice for their children? Were the reasons cited by these mothers in Texas similar to the reasons parents cited in other states? Would there be differences among the mothers according to particular characteristics?

In the interviews, I looked for common and contrasting reasons the mothers cited for choosing the TWI program. These rationales are illustrated in Figure 1. Creating a map of their rationales enabled me to see what the most prevalent reasons were for choosing the program. In addition, I was able to pinpoint similarities as well as differences among the families and nuances in their rationales. For example, all five mothers expressed the belief that the program

would provide their children with more opportunities, a motivation that was also prevalent across earlier studies on parents' reasons for choosing TWI (Craig, 1996; Gerena, 2010; Giacchino-Baker & Piller, 2006; Ramos, 2007, Shannon & Milian, 2002). The types of opportunities parents discussed with me were primarily educational and occupational, but other opportunities were also expressed, such as opportunities to communicate effectively during travel to Mexico or other Spanish speaking countries. Four of the mothers indicated that they believed cognitive benefits, particularly a broader range of vocabulary development, would be an advantageous result of their child's participation in the TWI program.

All five mothers were also in agreement about the increased ability to communicate with more people as a result of participation in the TWI program. Three other mothers, Ester, Debbie and Kathy, all expressed an interest in understanding what people were saying. Ester cited the importance of English for communicating with others in the United States. Two Spanish first mothers chose the program because it would facilitate their ability to help their children in school because they were receiving instruction and homework in Spanish. Both Marisol and Azucena, mothers who spoke Spanish as their first language, expressed this. They not only wanted to be intimately involved in their children's' education by helping them with their homework and their reading in Spanish, but the mothers also wanted to volunteer at the school and be able to communicate with their child's teacher. Because the children received instruction in Spanish for a large percentage of the day, they reasoned that TWI would help their children communicate more effectively with the majority of their family members who spoke Spanish. This ability to communicate with family is part of increased communication benefits but also related to the notion of *raíces*. Four of the five mothers cited the inclusion of familial and cultural roots as an important factor in their decision to enroll their children in TWI. Three of these mothers were

from Mexico and one was a white German-American married to a Mexican-American. These mothers felt that the TWI program would affirm their cultural and linguistic identities, reinforce religious and cultural values and traditions taught in the home, and also help their children if they chose to return to Mexico temporarily or permanently.

INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

Increased opportunities

As mentioned previously, one of the most common reasons mothers stated for enrolling their children in the TWI program was for additional educational and occupational opportunities, namely the economic or instrumental motivation for learning a second language. This supports the previous studies of parents and their reasons for enrolling their children in TWI programs. Five of the six studies cited in the literature review list increased opportunities as one of the top three reasons parents chose on surveys. This notion links to an ideology that learning two or more languages facilitates academic progress and provides future employment and economic opportunities.

Each of the five mothers in this sample discussed increased opportunities in one form or another as important for their decision to choose the TWI program. Four of the five indicated more occupational opportunities was a strong reason for enrolling their children. When I asked Kathy why she enrolled her children in TWI, she immediately responded, “So they will have more opportunities in life. Being bilingual will open up job possibilities, will help with English vocabulary, and will help the kids learn other languages more easily later.” Kathy’s concise response indicates that she had clear ideas regarding the benefits of TWI for her children. She outlined opportunities in general and named occupational as well as academic benefits. Later Kathy added recreational opportunities she sees as a benefit of bilingualism and the TWI

program. She said, “If they [her children] choose to travel more of the world, knowing Spanish will get them to a lot of places. Into Europe and into South America and it’ll help them to learn more languages.”

While travel was important for the English first mothers in this study, the Spanish first mothers all discussed occupational benefits and educational benefits. Azucena discussed increased occupational opportunities along with higher wages and provided an example of her nephew who is bilingual and attended schools in both the US and Mexico. She said,

Obvio, el bilingüe siempre va a ganar más. Son dos idiomas y se tienen que valorar y se están valorando ya. Y yo lo veo en mi sobrino. Mi sobrino, él es bilingüe y él esta en Florida ... tiene una posición muy bien, porque es bilingüe. Por eso yo lo quiero para mis hijos.

Obviously a bilingual [person] will always make more [money]. That’s two languages and they should be valued and they are being valued now. I see it in my nephew. My nephew, he is bilingual and he lives in Florida....He has a really good position because he is bilingual. For that reason I want it [bilingualism] for my children.

Azucena provided this example of her nephew to support her belief that bilingualism leads to more opportunities. She began with an emphatic “obvio”, followed by a statement presented as fact that bilinguals “siempre” make more money than monolinguals. She contradicted this slightly with a call to value languages and corrected herself with “they [languages] are being valued now”. She provided a personal, concrete example of her nephew who has a good, high paying job because he is bilingual. Using the experiences of her nephew as

an example, she stated her own desire for her children to have more occupational opportunities and believed this would be one outcome of their bilingualism.

In addition to potential job benefits, several mothers discussed the educational opportunities that would come about from the TWI program. Marisol stated it this way, “Llega un momento de que ellos crecen, primeramente Dios, vayan a la universidad, es lo que más deseo y creo que el programa los prepara mejor para eso” (“There will come the time when they grow up, God willing, and go to university, that is what I want the most [for them] and I think this program will prepare them best for that”). She felt that by acquiring bilingualism and by participating in a rigorous program with high expectations, her children would be effectively prepared to go to a university, one of the most important aspirations that she had for them.

Cognitive Benefits

While the mothers cited aspirations and increased opportunities for their children as perhaps the most common motivating factor for enrolling them in TWI, many also commented on cognitive benefits their children would receive from becoming bilingual and biliterate. These two rationales often went hand in hand. Debbie said, “being bilingual will help with English vocabulary eventually...and the Spanish vocabulary that they learn will always be in their brains as they move on to higher education”. Kathy gave an example from her own experiences. She said, “Plus I know from when I took French in high school it helped me with my vocabulary for the English side of things and I think it helped me on the SAT.” Likewise, Ester discussed the importance of bilingualism, and noted, “ser bilingüe, eres una persona muy intelectual, una persona de alto conocimiento” (“to be bilingual, you are an intellectual person, a person with high levels of knowledge”). These mothers wanted their children to have more opportunities and to also reap the cognitive benefits of increased vocabulary, intellectual knowledge and even the

possibility of achieving higher standardized test scores. This data gives voice to the Ester's idea of what makes an educated person (someone who is bilingual) and Debbie and Kathy's hopes that bilingualism would benefit their children in academic ways. It also confirms earlier survey data that showed parents thought the TWI program would provide biliterate and bilingual competency coupled with intellectual development and stimulation (Craig, 1996; Shannon & Milian, 2002).

Communication

The desire for increased opportunities is a strong rationale both in this study and previous studies on parents and TWI programs. Another common ideological underpinning for choosing to enroll their children in the TWI program across groups of parents is that of increased ability to communicate. All mothers in this study discussed the desire for their children to be bilingual and they felt communication with others was important. Marisol gave an example of her inability to understand clerks in stores and described her feelings this way,

Es difícil, es muy difícil, para mí sinceramente. Siento que se me cierra el mundo, yo que no sé inglés y no puedo comunicarme con gente aquí. Por eso, realmente, yo me enfoco mucho en ellas que aprendan tanto el español como el inglés.

It is hard, it is very hard, for me, really. I feel that the world is closed to me, since I do not know English and I can't communicate with people here. For that reason, really, I focus a lot that the girls learn just as much Spanish as English.

Marisol described how difficult it is for her to communicate because she feels left out of opportunities and you can sense the depth of emotion in her words, "se me cierra el mundo" she feels due to her lack of bilingualism and lack of English proficiency in an English dominant context. She reiterates that a rationale for emphasizing her daughters' bilingualism in school is

so they may experience more of the world and communicate effectively with others. And she clearly states this is a reason why she wants her children to learn just as much Spanish as English, as they would in a TWI program. She doesn't say she wants them to learn English as quickly as possible, nor does she privilege English as may be the case in the bilingual program at the school and certainly in the other option she has for her children of denying bilingual services and placing them in a monolingual English class. State law gives parents the option to deny services (Texas Education Agency, 2007). Marisol has an understanding that her daughters need to be able to communicate with family, friends and others in both languages, and she stresses the importance of Spanish.

Debbie also spoke about wanting to communicate more with others and this was related to their religious traditions and beliefs. When asked why they chose TWI for their daughter, Debbie said, "we kind of knew the benefits of it, like when they grow up they will be bilingual and have better job opportunities... [in our faith] we go door-to-door preaching to different people so we figured when she got older it would help her in that aspect because she would be able to speak to more people with English and Spanish." Debbie went on to discuss how they were encouraged by their clergy to learn many different languages to be able to communicate with a wider audience and they wanted their daughter to also be able to reap that benefit.

The theme of increased communication and the benefits of it in the lives of their children and for the mothers themselves was important. For these mothers, feeling connected to their children's schooling experiences and teachers was desirable. The Spanish first mothers felt that with their children enrolled in the TWI program, helping their children with schoolwork was possible as well as helping out at school. The opportunity to engage more fully with the teachers and understand their children's schooling experiences was the ideal. When I asked her about

why she enrolled her children in the TWI program, Azucena stated immediately, “me facilita ayudarlos” (“it makes it easier for me to help them”). And Marisol said, “realmente siempre me gustaba ir a ayudar a la escuela por que estaba al pendiente de ellas” (“actually, yes, I have always liked going to school to help because it made me aware of what was going on with them”) This connectedness among mothers, teachers, and children is an important finding that has been overlooked in previous studies on parents and TWI. Although it is recognized that parents often must choose TWI programs and they tend to be more involved, it is usually related to English speaking parents and their activism in maintaining or starting TWI programs (Shannon & Milian, 2002; Gerena 2010). In this study, Spanish first mothers were interested in being part of their children’s educational experience and they believed they could be more involved in TWI than if their children were enrolled in programs centered on English monolingualism.

Raíces

Most of the mothers expressed that learning Spanish fluently would maintain linguistic and cultural “raíces” or roots with familiar ties in Mexico. The belief was that maintaining one’s language was akin to maintaining one’s culture (cited by Marisol and Azucena, both Spanish speaking mothers who were born in Mexico) or reconnecting with one’s heritage (cited by Debbie whose husband was of Mexican descent). Four of the five mothers expressed an interest in their children remaining true to their roots or maintaining their heritage. Kathy was the one mother who did not describe family ties or connections to Spanish and it was not a heritage language for any family members. While in TWI programs there may be high numbers of students who do not have heritage or familial reasons for learning Spanish, in Texas, there are many children who are enrolled in TWI programs in order to reclaim the Spanish language that

was denied to their parents or grandparents in school (Blanton, 2004; San Miguel, 1988). The population of students in TWI programs is based on language proficiency and not ethnicity or heritage (Lindholm-Leary, 2001)

The connection to roots was an important reason stated by the Spanish first mothers in particular, even though Debbie's family also had a heritage connection. All three Spanish first mothers expressed the desire for their children to be connected to Mexico, in traditions, language, and culture. These mothers stressed the value of their children being able to communicate with extended family. In the following quote, Marisol also distinguishes deliberately bilingual individuals and families from those who choose not to impart their Spanish to their children. Marisol described the TWI program and her daughters in First Grade this way,

Ahorita hacen la escritura en español, sus números los cuentan en español, al leer, leen bien en español. Lo están escribiendo, que es lo importante, o sea realmente son raíces que uno trae allá de México, que ellos no se les olvide eso. Que sepan hablarlo y escribirlo perfectamente. De ese programa se trata eso...me gusta porque hay personas que sus hijos no hablan español con ellos.

Right now they are writing in Spanish, they are counting their numbers in Spanish, for reading, they read well in Spanish. They are writing in Spanish, that is what is important, because that is really the roots that one brings from over there in Mexico, that they don't forget that. That they know how to speak it and write it perfectly. That is what this program is about...I like it because there are people whose children don't speak Spanish with them.

Marisol thought additional opportunities were important, but knowing their roots may have been equally as salient for her. She distinguished this program from other programs in that the goals

are for students to know how to speak and write both languages well [“this is what the program is about...”] She also quoted the school principal when she said,

El director nos dijo, “háblenle mucho ustedes en español, que a ellos sus raíces no se les olviden, por que si no empiezan a hablar el inglés, y desde abajo empiezan a agarrar el inglés y el español lo van a echar para un lado.” Es lo que le decía a mi esposo para que aprendan los dos lenguajes, y me gusta que agarren ese lenguaje por que realmente las familias de nosotros, todos hablan español.

The principal told us, “Speak to them a lot in Spanish so that they don’t forget their roots because if not they start to speak English and from an early age they start to learn English and they will put Spanish aside.” That is what I tell my husband so they can learn two languages, and I would like for them to learn this language [Spanish] because really our families they all speak Spanish.

First Marisol evokes the authority of the principal who explicitly said to the parents in a meeting that they should speak to their children in Spanish. He went on to say that with Spanish spoken in the home the children would not forget their roots nor would they be likely to “put Spanish aside”. Marisol personalizes the importance of raíces or roots, elaborating on the principal’s position by stating that their whole family speaks Spanish. She emphasizes her point by referring to conversations she has with her husband, a joint decision maker in the education of their children. Accordingly, she recognizes the need for their daughters to learn two languages, Spanish and English, as well as maintaining relationships with extended family. Marisol’s response was based on a sociocultural rationale for learning two languages—that her children would preserve their connection to cultural values. She confirmed this thinking elsewhere in my interviews with her. On another occasion she said, “su lenguaje se va más enraizando y les está

ayudando a ser una vida mejor para ellos” (their language will become more ingrained and this helps them have a better life). She wanted her children not only to communicate more effectively with family, but to have a better quality of life because their linguistic and cultural roots would be rooted them from an early age.

Azucena also described the importance of her linguistic roots in a way that was fundamental to quality of life. In one interview we discussed various views of TWI and how school district personnel presented it to parents. Azucena reacted against the notion that TWI provided something “extra”. She stated, “No es extra. Lo siento, pero no es extra, es nuestro idioma. Y yo lo defiende porque son mis raíces, mis padres, [como] yo crecí. Soy Mexicana.” (“No, it is not extra. I’m sorry, but it is not extra, it is our language. And I will defend it because these are my roots, my parents, how I grew up. I am Mexican.”), Azucena also pointed out the importance of providing her children with cultural and linguistic readiness in the event the family decided to return to her Mexico. She said, “Siempre pensé que si llega pasar algo, yo pienso regresar a México. [I always thought that if something happens, we can return to Mexico].” For Azucena, her cultural and linguistic roots were core elements. She wanted to ensure that her children would have a strong bilingual foundation for learning and to be prepared to live in Mexico if necessary.

Cultural roots or values at times were described by mothers as recapturing a heritage language that was lost. It would also help children connect with grandparents, a theme brought up by Debbie. She remarked, “My parents speak German and just the fact that our daughter could speak two languages, we all think that is pretty cool, too.” The bilingual heritage in her own family consisted of multiple languages and was not restricted to Spanish and English. And

perhaps her own familial linguistic background contributed to why Debbie recognized the importance of language as a way to connect to extended family. Debbie said,

We had never even heard about it [Two-Way Immersion], but we thought, ‘well, that would be kind of cool,’ because my in-laws speak Spanish. It would also give Tanya the opportunity to learn the Spanish that her Dad didn’t ever get to learn.

Her grandparents are so proud of her.

The initial interest Debbie’s family had in TWI was related to the language abilities of her Spanish-speaking in-laws as well as Tanya’s father’s missed access to Spanish language development. The experiences of Debbie’s husband are not unique in Texas and parts of the Southwest. Many Mexican-Americans were forced to assimilate and punished for speaking Spanish in schools and in public throughout much of the twentieth century resulting in rapid language loss (Blanton, 2004; San Miguel, 1988). Although her husband was not taught Spanish as a child in part due to the treatment his parents received, Debbie wanted their daughter to have the opportunity to learn Spanish and to speak with grandparents in their native language. These intergenerational goals have been cited in earlier work by Lindholm-Leary (2001) where parents’ motivations were not strictly due to language dominance, but were also related to ethnic background. Parents who identified Spanish as a heritage language and lost the language due to sociohistorical factors and linguistic subordination agree on the importance of recapturing the heritage language. This may be a critical motivating factor for TWI programs in areas across the southwestern United States where punitive measures have been documented in schools in attempts to eradicate Spanish.

Discussion

All of these mothers expressed various reasons for enrolling their children in TWI, some of these reasons overlap and do not fit neatly into researcher-created categories as you may find in survey research. The qualitative nature of this study allows for a more in-depth look at the reasons why parents from varying backgrounds chose to enroll their children in a Spanish/English TWI program. It also gives voice to the mothers by sharing their reasons and perspectives using the mothers' own words.

All of the mothers in this study cited the belief that there would be increased opportunities for their children as an important reason for enrollment in TWIs. Other mothers had a desire for their children to maintain their *raíces* or to reclaim a heritage language that was lost. The English first mothers tended to emphasize a desire for increased academic success as a result of Two-Way Immersion whereas the Spanish first mothers indicated that they wanted their children to be able to communicate with more people and be connected to their familial, cultural, and linguistic roots. Some findings here confirm earlier research conducted in other states, such as the desire for increased opportunities, maintaining or reclaiming the Spanish language, and the ability to communicate with more people, either family members or the wider community (Craig, 1996; Giacchino-Baker & Piller, 2006; Gerena, 2010; Lindholm-Leary, 2001; Shannon & Milian, 2002).

There are several nuances related to the larger themes that contribute to a deeper understanding of the parents' desires and priorities. The English first parents discussed achievement scores and recreational travel opportunities, whereas Spanish first parents discussed better wages and travel to visit relatives in Mexico. This difference was also related to socioeconomic status. The families with more means tended to express desire of recreational travel and college entrance exams. While the Spanish first mothers did discuss the importance of

college, they did not mention standardized achievement tests that are often instrumental in college admittance.

Increased communication was also important for all mothers, as in earlier studies. Spanish first mothers cited a desire for their children to be able to communicate with a wider audience. The Spanish first mothers also talked about maintaining cultural ties and ethnic identity, and some discussed the possibility of returning with their children to Mexico. One mother, Debbie, discussed the important religious implications of bilingualism, both in travel and communication. She and her husband wanted their daughters to be able to communicate and work with more people worldwide through their religious community, and the TWI program would facilitate meeting this goal. The tie to religion as an aspect of communicating with others may be important to many families but has not been discussed in prior research studies of motivating factors for enrollment in TWI programs.

There are also some important differences in these findings from earlier studies. The participants in this study did not report that they took into consideration the reputation of the school nor did they have to endure hardships by enrolling their children in a program outside their neighborhood school (Giacchino-Baker & Piller, 2006). Perhaps those factors are more relevant to programs that are housed in magnet schools or that pull students from larger geographical areas. This was a neighborhood school that housed multiple programs within it. Mothers cited the amount of Spanish and the quality of Spanish and English taught in the TWI program (as opposed to the bilingual or monolingual program) as important factors.

Another important difference in this study is that English first parents did not report engaging in activism (Gerena, 2010), although some were asked to promote the program at parent information meetings. However, the Spanish first mothers sought closer ties to the

school. They wanted to be able to understand school assignments, homework, and to be able to assist teachers in classroom activities. The Spanish first mothers felt the TWI program would make this possible for them. While they would also be able to achieve this goal in a bilingual program, there are many contexts where TWI and bilingual programs are not available on the same campus or even in the same district. This is an important finding for schools implementing TWI programs and should be taken up by educators in these programs. The statements from Spanish first mothers confirm studies that debunk the myth that Spanish speaking parents are not interested in their children's education (Campos, Delgado, & Soto Huerta, 2011) and shows the importance of schools providing communication in parents' home language and better ways to provide opportunities for non-English speaking parents to be involved with their children's education.

Recommendations and Future Directions

This study confirms that while the most salient reasons for choosing TWI may appear to be similar (increased opportunities as well as better communication), parents from different backgrounds may have some different reasons for choosing to enroll their children in TWI programs. This work builds on the literature that describes why parents choose TWI and provides an in-depth look into the reasons these five mothers from diverse backgrounds chose the TWI program, adding to our understanding through personal examples and anecdotes from their lives. Educators and researchers need to take into account the differences both within and among groups in designing and implementing TWI programs and studies of these programs.

First, the different rationales for enrollment could lead to different expectations of the outcomes of the program. District personnel need to take these similarities and differences into account when planning programs (language distribution, for example), recruiting participants

(what do educators say to promote the program to different groups and how does this in turn influence their expectations), implementing, and evaluating programs. Educators need to acknowledge these different perspectives and weave them into TWI program planning as much as possible. Azucena's personal statement of, "no es extra... son mis raíces" juxtaposed with Kathy's rationale that TWI "will open up job possibilities, will help with English vocabulary" show us how wide the range of families' rationales, experiences and desired outcomes regarding TWI programs can be. And thus we must ask ourselves, are TWI programs responsive to these diverse needs? Are educators working within mandates and standardized curricula to ensure the perspectives of all students and families are represented?

Second, researchers need to be able to disaggregate data on questionnaires and in other data collected according to participants' varying backgrounds. Some previous studies did not ask parents to elaborate or explain their reasons or did not distinguish between parents from different language or socioeconomic backgrounds. Likewise, it is important to take into consideration that participants viewed the reasons for and benefits of TWI through the lenses of their own lives and experiences. In order to ensure that multiple perspectives are represented, future research also needs to take into account parents who do not choose TWI for their children. What are non-participating parents' perspectives and reasons for rejecting the program?

Moreover, this research was conducted when students were in their first few years of participation in the TWI program. Program sustainability is an important factor not measured in this study, but a reality facing some programs. While active parent participation is cited as a key component in TWI program sustainability (Alanís & Rodríguez, 2008), exactly how parent participation shapes programs longevity is not known. Future research may also gauge participants' and parents' views and experiences once they have finished the program and

entered secondary schools, college, and even adulthood. This could provide us with insight into long-term benefits of TWI programs in addition to academic outcomes (Thomas & Collier, 1997, 2002). Two-Way Immersion programs are unique in their goals and in the diverse populations they serve. In order to create strong, successful programs that have equitable outcomes for all students, we need to incorporate diverse perspectives into program design, implementation, and research. The mothers' perspectives presented here support earlier studies of parent perspectives and provide additional insight into the many reasons they enroll their children in TWI programs and the hopes they have for their futures.

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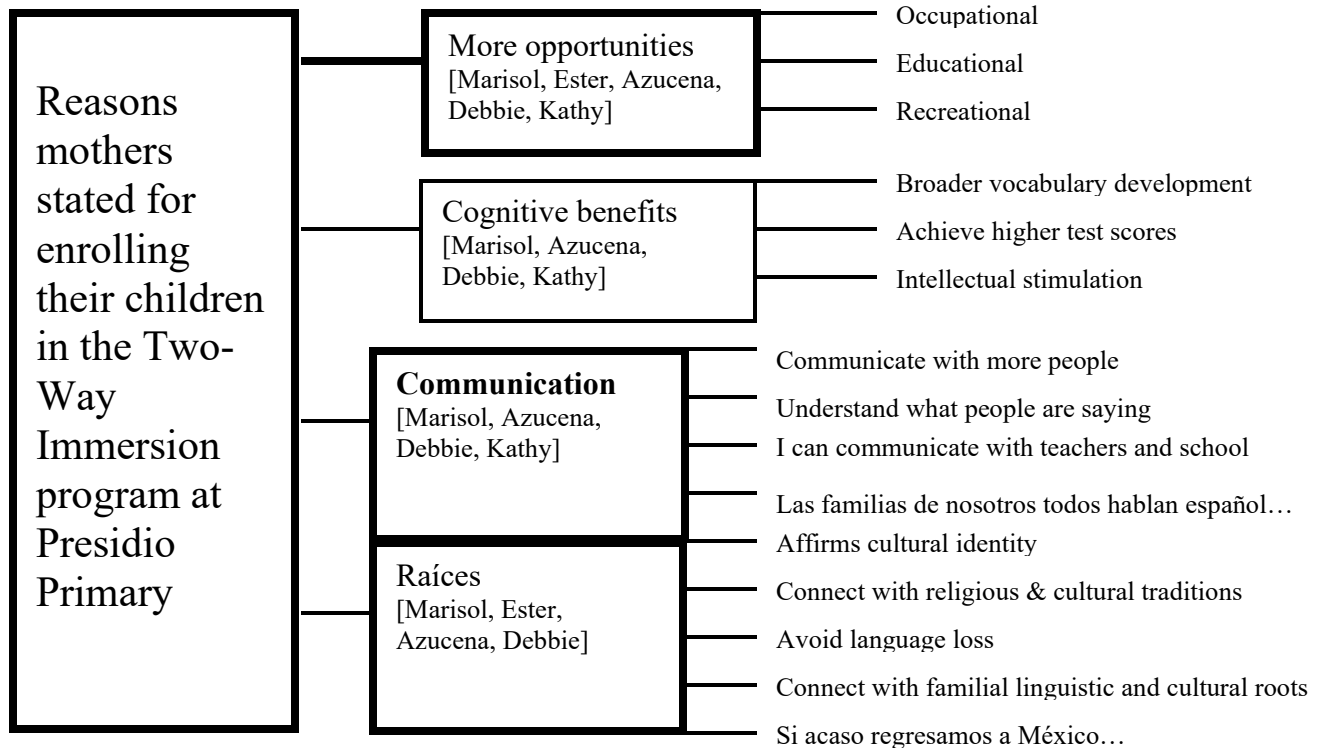
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Table 1: Continua of Mothers' Linguistic Environments

Name (pseudonym)	Marisol	Ester	Azucena	Debbie	Kathy
Dominant language	Spanish	Spanish	Spanish	English	English
Husband's dominant language	Spanish	Spanish	English	English	English
Parents	Spanish	Spanish	Spanish (M)	English/ German (M)	English
Educational background	6 th grade	High School Diploma + professional certificate (normalista)	High School Diploma + some college education	High School Diploma + some college education	college degree
Citizenship status	undocumented immigrant	undocumented immigrant	U. S. resident	U.S. born citizen	U.S. born citizen
Socioeconomic status	working poor	working poor	middle class	middle class	upper middle class/ affluent
Primary Language used in the home	Spanish with very limited English	Spanish with limited English use in home	Spanish with some English use in home	English with some Spanish use in home	English with very limited Spanish use in home
Language and literacy continua	←----- monolingual Spanish	-----	----- bilingual	-----	-----→ monolingual English

Figure 1: Mothers' Rationales for Enrolling Their Children in Two-Way Immersion

Appendix A: Guiding Questions for Semi-Structured Interviews
(Interviews will be conducted in participant's language of preference)

Why did you choose the Dual Language program for your child?

¿Por qué escogió ud. el programa de lenguaje dual para su hijo/a?

What are the goals that you have for your child related to the Dual Language program?

¿Cuales son las metas que Ud. tiene para su hijo/a en relación al programa de lenguaje dual?

Has the program fulfilled your expectations?

¿Y en su opinión el programa ha sido lo que esperaba?

What are your beliefs regarding bilingualism and bilingual education?

¿Cuales son sus ideas acerca de ser bilingüe y el educación bilingüe?

How has your child done in the program so far? (Academically, socially, linguistically)

What has been their most positive experience? And what has been their most difficult experience?

¿Cómo ha hecho su hijo/a en el programa hasta ahora? (Académicamente, socialmente, lingüísticamente) ¿Cual ha sido la mejor experiencia de su hijo/a? ¿Cual ha sido la experiencia mas difícil de el/ella?

How are your child's bilingual language skills? Has the program helped with this? Do you notice any advantages or if there is anything lacking in this area?

¿Y que tal sus estresas de idioma bilingüe? ¿El programa ayuda con el mantenimiento de sus dos idiomas? ¿Ud. ve alguna ventaja o problema en este área?

How has it been for you as a family? Have you been involved with the school? How would you describe the relationship of the school to your family and to the community at large?

¿Y para ustedes como familia, cómo ha sido? ¿Han participado en la escuela? ¿Como Ud. describiría la relación entre la escuela y su familia y en la comunidad?

Have there been any important challenges or issues for you or your child related to their schooling and/or the program?

¿Ha pasado cualquiera dificultad o problema importante para usted o su hijo/a sobre su educación o el programa?

The program has both native English speakers and native Spanish speakers. Have you found this to be an advantage or disadvantage for you/your child? How/why?

El programa bilingüe tiene tanto inglés-hablantes como español-hablantes. ¿Qué piensa de eso? ¿Es ventaja, desventaja? ¿Cómo/por qué?

Do you think the program is equitable to both language populations? Does it deal well with the differences?

¿Usted piensa que el programa es justo e igual para los dos poblaciones? ¿Piensa que maneja bien las diferencias entre los dos grupos de niños, de padres de familia?

(adapted from Palmer, 2004)