An Exploration of Indiana's English Language Learner Language Programming Models

Trish Morita Mullaney*[1] and April M. Burke*[2]

*[1]*Purdue University*
*[2]*Central Michigan University*

Abstract

Indiana provides a unique context for the study of English learner (EL) K-12 language program models, as it is home to the nation's second fastest growing EL population (Migration Policy Institute, 2010). Despite exponential growth of the state's EL community, Indiana is one of 15 states that does not require either bilingual or EL preparation for pre-service teachers and school leaders (Tanenbaum et al., 2012). Additionally, the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) neither expects nor requires teachers who work with ELs to be bilingual or EL-certified.

The impetus for this study was the growing demand from Indiana bilingual/EL leaders to understand the variant ways the state's K-12 English language programs were conceptualized and instituted, especially for schools with predominantly Hispanic communities. This study contributes to the limited amount of research on bilingual and EL programming models in Midwestern schools with relatively recent and growing Hispanic populations.

The primary purpose of this study was to examine how Indiana's bilingual/EL district leaders implement, negotiate, and perceive the effectiveness of their English language programs. In this survey study, we examined the characteristics of Indiana's bilingual education/English learner (BE/EL) district leaders and how they implement, negotiate, and perceive the effectiveness of their instructional program models for emergent bilinguals (EBs). We developed a survey to investigate the following: 1) the backgrounds and experiences of BE/EL leaders, and 2) the types of bilingual and EL programs implemented by participants' districts. Preliminary findings show that a variety of BE/EL program models operate concurrently even within the same district and that bilingual education programming is rare for emergent bilinguals.

Keywords: English language learners, ELL program models, bilingual education, emergent bilinguals, Indiana, leadership

Introduction

In this survey study, we examined the characteristics of Indiana's bilingual education/English learner (BE/EL) district leaders and how they implement, negotiate, and perceive the effectiveness of their instructional program models for emergent bilinguals (EBs)[1]. We developed a survey to investigate the following: 1) the backgrounds and experiences of BE/EL leaders, and 2) the types of bilingual and EL programs implemented by participants' districts. These two areas were selected for investigation in response to a growing demand from Indiana BE/EL leaders to understand the variant ways that BE/EL programs are instituted and assessed. Preliminary findings show that a variety of BE/EL program models operate concurrently even within the same district and that bilingual education programming is rare for emergent bilinguals.

Statement of Problem

Indiana has the second fastest growing EB population in the US (Migrant Policy Institute, 2010), having grown over 500% from 1999-2014 (Morita-Mullaney, 2016) and representing 263 distinct languages (Indiana Department of Education, 2014a). Despite the exponential growth of the state's EB community, Indiana is one of 15 states that does not require any BE/EL preparation for pre-service teachers or school leaders (Tanenbaum et al., 2012), and the IDOE neither expects nor requires such certifications (Indiana Department of Education, 2010). Preparation of pre-service teachers fails to address the role of the native language, cultural considerations for ELLs and the need for oral language development, which are necessary skills to promote their academic and language learning needs and rights (Samson & Collins, 2012). This under-preparation

has a grave impact on Indiana's EBs, 95% of whom are Latino (Indiana Department of Education, 2014b).

Literature Review

Leadership preparation programs for school administrators have no national requirement to address EB needs (Anderson, 2001; Council of Chief State School Officers, 2008), making BE/EL program content elective, meaning most leadership programs do not address this unique student community. This omission of EBs within leadership standards and preparation impacts the programmatic and curricular decision-making made by principals who can become future school leaders of schools with EBs (Baecher, Knoll, & Patti, 2013; Brooks, Adams, & Morita-Mullaney, 2010; Menken & Solorza, 2014). Moreover, many school leaders across the US do not have significant understanding of the instructional models used to address the needs of emergent bilinguals.

Great latitude for program models are employed for EBs throughout the US, but each model has varying degrees of effectiveness. Key scholars identify five program models designed for EBs (Thomas & Collier, 1997; Thomas & Collier, 2002), three of which are English as a Second Language (ESL) or English-only (EO) models, which do not use students' home languages during instruction. The other two models include the use of the students' first language as a medium of instruction and are considered forms of bilingual instruction. Bilingual models that use the students' native language have positive, long term impacts on learning, academic achievement and biliteracy development (Burke, Morita-Mullaney, & Singh, 2016; Thomas & Collier, 1997; Thomas & Collier, 2002; Umansky & Reardon, 2014). Despite the known benefits of bilingual education, Indiana's dominant program model is ESL. This reported study of BE/EL leaders and perceived program effectiveness for EBs is timely and significant as it investigates a Midwestern state with a rapidly growing EB population that is predominantly Hispanic. We developed a survey to garner information which identified and described the types of

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[1] We use the term emergent bilinguals (EBs) to reference English Learners (ELs) as they possess multiple linguistic repertoires while acquiring English and developing academically (García, 2009). This additive term more appropriately recognizes their linguistic assets.

preparation that EB leaders had, which we reference as EB leadership characteristics. We addressed the following research questions:

- What are the characteristics of district BE/EL leaders in Indiana?
- What language program models are employed for Indiana's emergent bilingual population?

Methodology

The impetus for this study was a series of conversations held with members of the Indiana Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (INTESOL) leadership group between 2011 and 2014. INTESOL is the Indiana state affiliate of the international Teaching of English to Speakers Other Languages (TESOL) group and our Indiana affiliate mostly consists of K-12 practitioners in public schools. INTESOL established their leadership group for these K-12 leaders in 2011. During INTESOL meetings, each leader discussed a variety of language models and reasons for implementation. The leaders also remarked that their own leadership preparation for EBs was lacking. To investigate the language program models used, a survey study was designed based on review of statewide data reports, formative feedback from meetings and informal conversations during INTESOL leadership meetings.

Samples and Participants

We recruited participants at a monthly INTESOL leadership meeting where 21 BE/EL leaders from Indiana gathered monthly to discuss policy developments, current research, and effective instructional models. At the time of the study, we (two university professors) were also regular participants in the INTESOL leadership group and had fostered rapport with many of the participants. Consent was solicited from participants at the meeting, and they received a follow-up email that explained the online survey.

Instrument

We developed a 26-item online survey consisting of primarily forced-response questions to investigate the following: 1) the backgrounds and experiences of BE/EL leaders, and 2) the types of BE or EL programming models used. These areas of exploration were selected because many of the BE/EL leaders largely maintained the BE/EL program they had prior to taking leadership with little understanding of its pedagogical foundations.

The survey had three different types of questions: 1) forced responses of yes/no; 2) forced selection from a list; and 3) open-ended responses. For example, one of the yes/no questions asked, "Is overseeing the BE/EL program your main responsibility?" Further, we used Likert scales to determine the participants' perceptions of the program quality from very ineffective to highly effective. Lastly, the latter part of the survey asked open-ended questions about program effectiveness. Demographic data from the IDOE was also reviewed, which included English language learning data and academic achievement of EBs to contextualize survey findings.

Procedure

First, we emailed the online survey to the participants we recruited from the INTESOL leadership meeting. Of the 21 meeting attendees, 13 fully completed the survey, but two responders were not BE/EL district leaders; therefore, their surveys were omitted, resulting in a total of 11 participants. This 52% response rate yielded a representative sample and is regarded as a high rate of return for a survey with individuals (Baruch & Holtom, 2008). We attribute this relatively high response rate to our introduction of the survey and our historic relationship with participants. Participants served in a variety of districts including rural, small towns, suburbs and urban settings.

Yes/no-forced responses and selection-forced responses were analyzed by calculating the total number of responses each participant provided for each question. Open-ended responses were analyzed

for emergent themes related to the participants' perceived successes and concerns about their BE/EL program related to student outcomes on English learning and academic achievement for EBs.

Findings

The characteristics of Indiana BE/EL leaders carries a variety of titles and positions within central offices and leaders have varying degrees of preparation in the BE/EL teaching specialty and/or leadership. Program models also vary with only one hosting a transitional bilingual education (TBE) model. The major findings are displayed in this section with narrative description, tables and figures.

Institutional leadership characteristics

Leaders' self-reported titles included Directors, Coordinators, and Specialists. None of the given roles included the terms bilingual, multilingual, or bicultural (see Table 1). Eight of the 11 participants had administrative contracts, and of those eight, three of them fulfilled duties other than emergent bilingual student oversight. Those with the title 'Director' were more likely to have an administrator contract. Only two participants were on their executive district cabinets where they had regular interactions with Assistant Superintendents and Superintendents to influence BE/EL program decisions. Five participants had teacher contracts, and one participant taught in the morning and led the program in the afternoon. Two participants were housed in school buildings and not their central offices; one with a teacher contract and another with an administrative contract.

At the time of the survey, BE/EL leaders reported having served in their roles from 0-6 years, but three participants had over 15 years serving as BE/EL teachers. Those with 0-3 years of experience had titles that included the term Title III, which refers to the federal policy with oversight of BE/EL programming. Five of the 11 participants held Indiana ESL education licenses. Two more held bilingual-bicultural licenses, when Indiana offered this type of teaching license from 2005-2010 (Indiana Office of Educator Licensing, 2010); however, they were not in districts that employ bilingual models. Four did not possess licenses, and their districts did not require them to be EL or BE licensed; they had only received training at IDOE sponsored EL professional development.

Language Program models

All participants reported two to five different models concurrently operating in their districts with differences between developmental levels and school buildings (Figure 1). These models included transitional bilingual education, regular education, English to Speakers of Other Language (ESOL), sheltered English, pull-out ESL, ESL, structured immersion, content-based English as a Second Language (ESL) and other. These nine models come from a menu of choices that districts must identify on their annual IDOE Language Minority report (Indiana Department of Education, 2015). Pull-out ESL and regular education are problematic choices. Pull-out ESL is not a language model and regular education is an admission of no service provision, which is unlawful (Castañeda v. Pickard, 1981). Most leaders reported content-based ESL language model but described it as the Sheltered Instructional Operational Protocol (SIOP) (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2006; Short, Vogt, & Echevarria, 2008), which is an instructional framework that promotes the inclusion of students' background knowledge and comprehensible input within instruction. Structured immersion was the second most identified language model.

Only two schools in one of the 11 representative districts had a transitional bilingual education model in their schools solely for newcomer EBs. Six districts had language programming in 0-33% of their buildings (even though EBs were enrolled in nearly all buildings) violating state and federal laws, which require language programming in schools attended by EBs.

Staffing

Participants reported that staffing ranged from classified to certified personnel and spanned beyond BE/EL specialists including general education,

reading, and Title I teachers (see Table 2). Certified EL teachers and assistants were more likely to be multilingual whereas general education staff employed within the BE/EL programs were less likely to be. The percentage of BE/EL programs with specialists was over 50%, yet there were some programs staffed with general education or reading teachers only.

Teacher/student ratios are established in four of the 11 districts and range from 20-40 EBs per EL-certified teacher. Seven districts have no established teacher/student ratios. One district reported having as many as 150 students per BE/EL-certified teacher.

Conclusion

Findings from this study indicate that in the participating districts, there is a lack of research-based BE/EL language models and there are variant requirements and expectations for BE/EL leadership roles. Some districts have as many as five program models, and there is little coordination between buildings in the same district leading to challenges in curriculum coherence. Because Indiana does not require BE/EL licensure for BE/EL leaders, many lack an understanding of BE/EL pedagogy and programming.

This study indicates the need for follow-up interviews with participants to understand their rationale for selecting English-only language programs. With Indiana's recent policy adoption into the Indiana code of the Certificate of Multilingualism (2015), leaders now have greater latitude in choosing BE/EL program models that can include bilingual education for Indiana's emergent bilinguals, benefiting the growing Indiana Latino student community.

Table 1. Participating BE/EL Leaders' Titles

Title	Admin Contact
English as a New Language Coordinator	Yes
English Learner/Migrant Director	Yes
Director of Language Development - Title III Director	Yes
English as a New Language Program Coordinator	Yes
Title III Director	Yes
English Learner Director	Yes
Director of Communications and Language Programs	Yes
Curriculum Coordinator	Yes
English Learner Coordinator	No
Academic Support Specialist	No
Language Minority Coordinator	No
EL Coordinator	No

Figure 1. BE/EL program models
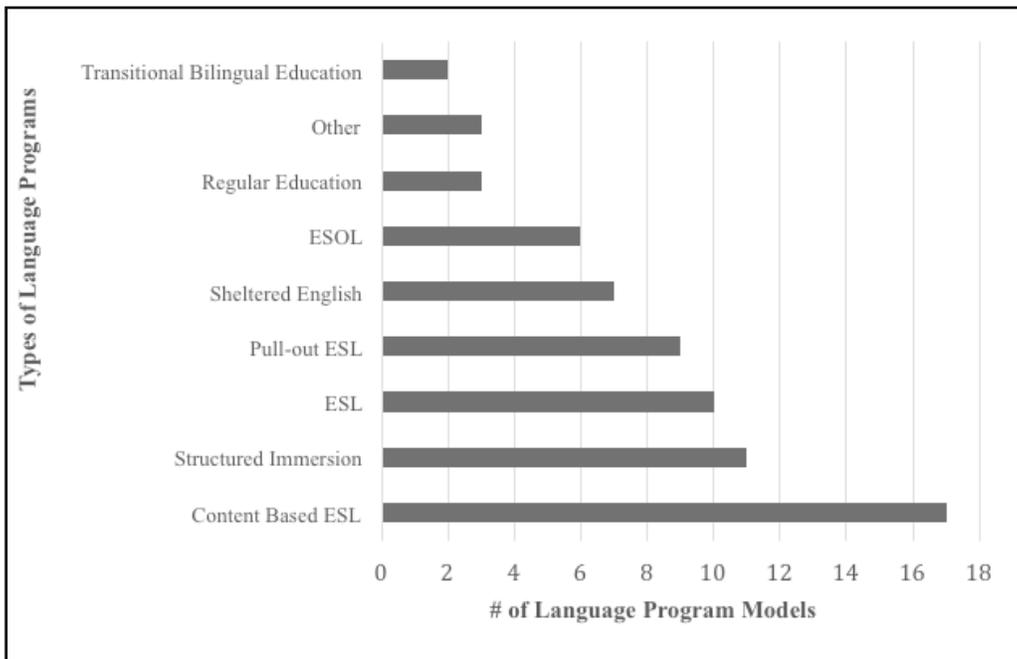
Table 2. BE/EL Program Staffing Descriptions

Role	Certified		Multilingual	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Certified English Learner Teacher	11	0	9	2
Certified Elementary Teacher	10	0	4	6
Certified Secondary Teacher	10	0	5	5
Classified Instructor	0	10	9	1
Certified Reading Teacher	5	0	1	4
Certified Other	1	0	1	0
Non-Certified Other	0	1	1	0

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