The Policy and Practice of Dual Immersion: Planning for the Secondary Years

A conference organized by the UCLA Confucius Institute and the Graduate School of Education & Information Studies, UCLA
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A one-day conference on dual language immersion (DLI) programming at the secondary level in U.S. schools was held at UCLA in May 2016. An increasing number of schools and districts face new challenges with former elementary DLI students aging up to the middle and high school levels. This conference focused on issues of teacher recruitment and preparation; program models and curricular resources; and policies to support advancement. It is the organizers’ intention that future conferences address additional considerations, such as administrative preparation and support, dual-language assessment contexts, and student-home-school connections.

UCLA Confucius Institute funded the conference organization and presenter costs. Together with the UCLA Graduate School of Education & Information Studies (GSE&IS), the Confucius Institute was uniquely positioned to host such a conference due to its ability to connect educators, administrators, researchers, and university faculty who have a mutual interest in dual immersion. The organizers were helped by a Steering Committee of eight K-16 educators (see Appendix A). Staff from the California Association for Bilingual Education and the California World Language Project assisted in the creation of two of the conference panels.

The conference focused on a broad spectrum of partner languages relevant to Southern California, including Spanish, Mandarin, Cantonese, Japanese, Armenian, French, Korean, Vietnamese and Arabic. While its initial target audience was Southern California educators and administrators, the conference expanded to include individuals from around the U.S. and abroad. The goal was to provide an immediate plan of action to begin to implement the ideas exchanged. This report is intended to serve as a catalyst for change through new or improved DLI policies.

This conference report contains:

- An overview of the conference presentations and topics
- A synthesis of the panel presentations, questions/answers, and attendee comments during breakout group sessions
- Recommendations for next steps by a wide variety of stakeholders
- Suggested components of a secondary level program (Appendix B) and a program components self-review tool (Appendix C)

I. CONFERENCE OVERVIEW
The day began with the perspectives of adolescent students who have attended DLI programs since kindergarten. Organizer Alison Bailey, a professor of Human Development and Psychology at GSE&IS, intended that these student voices serve as a reminder that the success of secondary DLI programs depends on student buy-in in ways that elementary programs do not: DLI program courses face increased competition from the variety of electives offered to teenage students as well as from out-of-school activities.

Next, there was a welcome and overview of recent California language policy initiatives from Dorian Almaraz of the office of California State Senator Tony Mendoza. Patricia Gándara, a research professor at GSE&IS, provided an overview of the status of English Learners (ELs) in California and the role of DLI programs in the education of EL students. Stanford University’s Amado Padilla followed with a keynote presentation on current policies and DLI program outcomes.

The day’s first panel, chaired by Steve Zimmer of Los Angeles Unified School District’s (LAUSD’s) Board of Education, discussed teacher recruitment and preparation. Presenters were Susan Wang, principal of Broadway Elementary in LAUSD; Ann Tollefson, an independent consultant; and Jennifer Li of the RAND Corporation. A second panel addressed the challenges of curricular development and DLI resources. Chair Brandon Zaslow, from the Southern California office of the California World Language Project, led James Orihuela of Long Beach USD, Gregg Roberts of the Utah State Office of Education, and Iman Hashem, also from the Southern California office of the California World Language Project, in presenting current challenges facing schools, as well as proposed models for solutions.

Following these panels, attendees had an opportunity in breakout discussion groups to share insight and ideas inspired by the day’s presenters, discuss additional challenges they were currently facing, and share successful program strategies. After debriefing as a whole group to discuss common themes and challenges that had arisen in the breakout discussion groups, the day finished with a third panel on the policy implications of DLI education. This panel was led by Jan Gustafson-Corea, CEO of the California Association for Bilingual Education, and included presentations from the California Department of Education’s Elena Fajardo and CSU Fullerton’s Natalie Tran.

Video of the keynote, panels, and debriefing session are available here.
What follows is a synthesis of the panel presentations, interwoven with concerns and suggestions voiced by teachers, administrators, researchers, and policy makers present in the breakout discussion groups.

II. PANEL AND DISCUSSION TOPICS
Teacher Training and Recruitment Pipeline
Creating a pipeline for qualified teachers is an issue that begins early and is a challenge best shared by both the K-12 and the postsecondary educational systems. It was argued that if prospective DLI teachers themselves attend educational systems that devalue DLI education, many will lack the specialized vocabulary needed to teach high-level content in a partner language at the K-12 level. Participants felt that university classes, for their part, must address fluency without sacrificing content related to pedagogy or classroom management. University teacher education programs can be encouraged to address this need by providing more content classes in target partner languages. Presenters highlighted how districts must also look at incentives to attract and retain target partner language teachers, and to continue their professional development. Finally, it was suggested that state policy makers should consider adding a range of partner languages for teachers seeking a bilingual authorization with their teaching credential, and federal policy makers, in turn, can aid in the creation of a teacher pipeline by proposing initiatives that facilitate visas for foreign teachers: both those currently enrolled in U.S. universities as international students, and foreign residents who have received teaching credentials abroad.

Curriculum and Content
A primary concern for educators is the difficulty in keeping students engaged in a DLI program; Advanced Placement (AP) course credit in a world language is not incentive enough. Students need options beyond language courses that can compete with the range of elective classes their peers are able to take. If DLI programs do not provide these options, it was argued that they may fail students in two ways: first, they may lead to student burnout as a result of a grueling academic track in which students must meet DLI program requirements along with additional electives. Second, if programs are offering only language classes, as opposed to a range of content classes in the target partner language, then they may not be considered “dual language immersion” education; they are simply programs of advanced language instruction.

Rather than offering DLI students language and culture classes only, administrators expressed a desire to increase the number of content classes offered in target partner languages, using arts and technology to make classes engaging and relevant, and, where possible, media, news, and other sources from popular culture to supplement textbook resources. (Although participants discussed distance learning and Massive Open Online Courses or MOOCs as a potential source of content, MOOCs have apparently shown inconsistent learning outcomes, and many felt they may not be a viable solution at present.) However, districts with similar models already in place cautioned that students cannot make sufficient language progress through content-based...
instruction alone; both content and language classes were thought to be necessary for successful dual language immersion.

Many educators cited Utah’s DLI model, presented by Gregg Roberts of the State Office of Education, as an inspiration for other states. Utah’s program outlines goals throughout K-12 that aim to provide a smooth transition to postsecondary education. After focusing on content-based language in K-6, DLI instruction shifts to the development of cognitive skills and cultural fluency in 7th and 8th grade. In 9th grade, students enroll in a benchmark course to prepare them for high-level university language classes. They then enroll in “university bridge courses,” earning high school as well as college credit. The Utah model provides what educators see as three distinct advantages: mutual benefit between high schools and higher education partners; an articulated plan from K-16; and legislative funds for K-12 language education with the support of community college partnerships.

Policy Implications
K-12 educators felt that they needed to learn to inform themselves regarding the policies regarding proposed legislation. In addition, educators felt they must establish a coalition within and across educational sectors, and bring in allies in order to influence statewide policies. Local, state, and national governments, it was perceived, have a responsibility to support and reward bilingualism and DLI programs. Though DLI education shows promise in helping to close the opportunity gap between students of different linguistic and socioeconomic backgrounds, policy makers must first address the challenge of closing the access gap at the K-12 level; if DLI is not made accessible to all students, it is believed that this gap will continue to widen.

Additional Themes
While not the target content of the scheduled panels, several additional themes surfaced during the question/answer segments and breakout group discussions. These are summarized below:

**K-12 student pathways.** Educators at the conference expressed a desire for community colleges to open more spots to high school students, as well as for policies that allowed for the possibility of student internships in order to increase the real-world application of students’ language learning. They felt these programs would develop student leadership and students’ capacity to advocate for multilingualism more broadly. In addition, they suggested bridging programs, graduation credit incentives, and smoother pathways for AP courses or college credit.

**Post-secondary student pathways.** The confusion surrounding college credit requirements is one that must be addressed in order for DLI programs to succeed at the secondary level. A representative from the University of California confirmed that students can earn UC credit with an AP language score of 3 or higher; in addition, students can fulfill their A-G high school graduation requirements. However, most K-12 educators present at the conference were not
aware of this policy, and were unsure of the GPA credit that students would earn from taking an AP exam early in high school.

University buy-in is also needed in terms of acknowledging the value of DLI education at K-12, and working to ensure that language knowledge and expertise is rewarded in both the admissions process and in the awarding of college credits.

*Transparency in assessment.* Assessments must have a common alignment. In order for the *Seal of Biliteracy* to carry weight and to be interpretable to post-secondary institutions and prospective employers, standards of assessment and evaluation must not only be transparent, but consistent across the different DLI partner languages.

### III. RECOMMENDATIONS

In this section of the report, we make recommendations for next steps by the different stakeholders involved in DLI programming.

**What school districts can do:**
- Be flexible with students’ already packed schedules; continue a strong focus on language/culture but think creatively about incorporating target partner languages into courses teenagers want to take, such as courses in media, technology, and the arts.
- Allow teens enrolled in DLI programs to be involved in course design to ensure maximum engagement, as well as deeper content and language learning.
- Offer the *Seal of Biliteracy* in the DLI program partner languages.

**What educators can do:**
- Advocate for bilingual credentialing in additional partner languages.
- Request resources from administrators for translations of content area resources.
- Join DLI professional learning communities (e.g., [http://plc.labschool.ucla.edu](http://plc.labschool.ucla.edu)) to share ideas and resources.

**What state officials can do:**
- Disseminate information on state funding, credentialing, and international language educator visa initiatives.
- Work with lawmakers to maximize the impact of new DLI policies.

**What lawmakers (state and national) can do:**
- Sponsor new bills, or support existing bills, that promote DLI and bilingual programming, e.g., new visa legislation to sponsor international for target language and content classes.
- Allocate funding for research and development studies of DLI efficacy.
- Take input from parents and teachers about their desired language programming.
• Allocate specific funding to Institutions of Higher Education offering to support content classes for high school students.

What parents can do:
• Advocate for a range of language, culture, and content courses in partner languages.
• Provide material and moral support/encouragement of their children’s participation in DLI.

What DLI students can do:
• Advocate for student site councils to provide input and feedback on DLI program content and course offerings in partner languages.
• Find/create a wide range of venues for speaking, reading, and writing in partner languages.

What researchers can do:
• Conduct studies of the efficacy of DLI programming (include broad range of outcomes: academic, linguistic, social, and emotional).
• Disseminate clear syntheses of research findings in order to bridge research and practice.

What Institutions of Higher Education (IHE) can do:
• Form broad-base connections between educators, administrators, researchers and lawmakers.
• Offer advanced language/culture courses and internship opportunities to high school DLI students.
• Take DLI education (e.g., Seal of Biliteracy) into account in admissions.
• Take the lead in providing courses for partner language credentialing, on pedagogies for content and language instruction, and on dual-language assessment literacy for educators.
APPENDICES

Appendix A: Acknowledgements
We would like to thank the presenters who stimulated discussion on each of the topics presented above. In addition, we would like to thank the members of the steering committee, organizing team, and student volunteers for their work in making this conference possible.

Presenters:
Dorian Almaraz, Office of California State Senator Tony Mendoza
Elena Fajardo, Language Policy & Leadership Office, California Department of Education
Patricia Gándara, Department of Education, UCLA
Jan Gustafson-Corea, California Association for Bilingual Education
Iman Hashem, CSU Long Beach; Southern CA Office of the California World Language Project
Jennifer Li, RAND Corporation
James Orihuela, Long Beach Unified School District
Amado Padilla, Graduate School of Education, Stanford University
Gregg Roberts, Utah State Office of Education
Ann Tollefson, Independent Consultant
Natalie Tran, CSU Fullerton
Susan Wang, Broadway Elementary School, Los Angeles Unified School District
Brandon Zaslow, Southern CA Office of the California World Language Project
Steve Zimmer, Board of Education, Los Angeles Unified School District

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Appendix B: Suggested Key Components for Secondary Level DLI Programs

The graphic below displays suggestions, based on ideas exchanged at the conference, to help ensure the success of DLI programs in middle and high school.

| Provide sufficient support/time for partner language/culture courses throughout secondary years | Offer engaging electives in partner language: new media/technology skills/contemporary issues, the arts |
| Make schedules flexible to meet graduation & college eligibility | Adopt bilingual assessment to monitor progress and achievement; also for offering Seal of Biliteracy |
| Anticipate staffing needs: plan out-years, near-term opportunistic (teachers with strong language and content skills offer classes) | Encourage student (& parent) involvement in program design: create student site council for input and feedback |
| Increase selection of academic content classes for less common partner languages (e.g., explore MOOCs) | Partner with IHEs to access advanced language courses, internships and exchange programs |
Appendix C: Self-Review of Key DLI Programming Components at the Secondary Level

1. Does our program include both language/culture classes in the partner language and academic content instruction through the partner language?
2. Does our program include a range of engaging electives in the partner language?
3. Does our program have long-term and near-term planning for content area coverage in the partner language (i.e., regularly providing updates of staffing needs to district personnel; mechanisms to bring in teachers to teach academic content in a partner language as opportunities arise)?
4. Does our program support student preparation for the State Seal of Biliteracy on student graduation diplomas?
5. Does our program have a transparent mechanism for assessing student progress and achievement in the partner language (summatively for accountability and course-end achievement; formatively for instructional decision-making and student feedback)?
6. Does our program have a way to include students’ perspectives on the curriculum and governance (e.g., a DLI student site council)?
7. Does our program include parents in decision-making?
8. Does our program have resources for translation of existing and development of new resources in the partner language? Do we know how to apply for district and other funding for resource development?
9. Does our program have connections with local Institutions of Higher Education for student access to advanced language/culture courses and internships in the partner language?
10. Does our program support and actively encourage teacher professional development in the area of dual immersion (i.e., part-time bilingual authorization/credentialing program participation; workshop and conference attendance; research participation; release time for participation in DLI PLCs)?
11. Is our program registered with the Center for Applied Linguistics registry of U.S. DLI programs?

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1 If the answer is “no” to any of these questions, we recommend the administrator/teacher discuss with colleagues/students/parents (as appropriate) ways in which the program might consider the inclusion of the omitted component.