

# HAMPERING THE DOGMATIZATION WITHIN THE SYSTEM BY BUILDING AN ITINERANT PRACTICE IN BILINGUAL EDUCATION AND DUAL-LANGUAGE PROGRAMS

**JOSE OROZCO**

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS RIO GRANDE VALLEY

**MICHAEL WHITACRE**

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS RIO GRANDE VALLEY

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.51734/hh1q3n42>

## **ABSTRACT**

This paper focuses on dual-language programs and the transformation of implementation through the lens of Itinerant Curriculum Theory (ICT), curricularized language, and personal pedagogies, and how it impacts the way educators work within a dual-language program. The pedagogies of educator practices and influences included individuals with different ideologies, education, experience, distinct backgrounds, methods, and aspirations were part of the interactive mechanisms and educator practices that were analyzed. Thus, it concludes that the mindset and pedagogical approach affects the implementation of any program or model and shows how disparate agendas shape the program, its implementation, and the effect on the child.

**KEYWORDS:** curriculum, subaltern voice, linguisticism, itinerant curriculum theory, evasion pedagogies

## **RECOMMENDED CITATION**

Orozco, J., Whitacre, M. (2024). Hampering the Dogmatization within the System by Building an Itinerant Practice in Bilingual Education and Dual-Language Programs. *Rio Bravo: A Journal of the Borderlands*, 25, 202-207

These are accounts of observations and discussions with educators. Their sentiment is that changing the system and the learning experience under this attested guise model of progress while using the same practices in the organization perpetuates the hegemony and linguisticisms of Westernized epistemologies prevalent in bilingual education.

The selection of forms of knowledge, traditions, and educational values creates, hastens, and preserves epistemicides in education, exercising power that maintains current hegemonies. Dual language bilingual education (DLBE) programs could succumb to the cultural perspectives and performance rituals that strengthen one group's political and economic ability at the expense of the rest. These influences can continue to replicate the inequalities that "disproportionately serve and represent the interests of white English speakers at a policy-level and classroom level, and it can reproduce the social and linguistic disparities it is intended to disrupt" (Bernstein et al. 2021, p. 384). The knowledge selection to be imparted, the methods, the practices, and how everything will be measured are acts characterized by engaging in the forfeiture of certain aspects and elements conducive to a more humanizing schooling experience. All in the name of perfect reproducibility, yielding scripted learning. Everyone has a role that must be played accordingly, "we make the school into a box in which they are to be kept and moved at the ringing of the bell" (Janson and Silva 2017, p.12). Decentering these perspectives is necessary to hamper epistemological purges already taking place in the schooling experience. "Schooling issues, such as assessment, subject matter, hours of textbooks, and the knowledge being transmitted, are wrongly accepted as dogma. Such a limited vision makes it almost impossible to have a vision of schooling without meeting such conditions" (Paraskeva 2016, p.212).

Myths, traditions, and taboos constrain the education field. They should be acknowledged, considering how these aspects entwine the education fabric and demarcate the experience, restraining educators in the name of accountability and trackable efficiency. Within these aspects is where the dominant Western Eurocentric perspectives reside, permeating education, including the domineering traditions and structures granting an advantage to some, and marginalizing others (9). It is part of the standardization movement; all aspects of schooling and learning become checkboxes to be tracked, measured, and monitored, losing meaning and value in the process (Janson and Silva 2017). Schools are the means and place that foster students' potential, creating the way for self-transformation (McLaren 2002). The pervasiveness within the system guided by linguisticism is always present and palpable with a validated scientific production that privileges English above all languages. These representations embody an obdurate aura that preserves and disseminates how participants interpret all aspects housed in the symbolic systems participating in the learning experience extending the hegemony by cementing processes in education. "Teacher (and learner) images of languages and cultures are often 'schoolarised', instrumental, ethnocentric, monolithic, and stereotyped. These images reinforce hegemonic understandings of the value of languages and a limited view of their social, cultural, political, and identity role" (Moreira 2017, p. 4).

Unchallenged and unrecognized myths in education are partly due to the surrender to the acceptance of the dogma of the language decided in curriculum and instruction. Fixed by meritocratic interpretations, low educator expectations, and a repressive curriculum (5) with “the formulation of educational “objectives, “the selection of” learning “experiences, the organization of those learning experiences, and their evaluation” (Huebner 1966, p. 104) directed at minority students with a different language and cultural background that are not aligned with what is considered mainstream ideologies.

Having the facility to visit different campuses in the capacity of a DLBE specialist, one can witness how ideologies, quick-win mentalities, or mitigating circumstances can alter efficacy. Each time I enter a classroom, I can see model variations. The first thing to notice is the classroom environment. Though, it serves multiple purposes facilitating social interactions, content learning, language development, and acquisition to name a few. A fallacy quickly relegates it to serve an aesthetic value for individuals visiting the classroom. It makes an excellent impression to have the classroom organized and decorated in a certain way with colorful representations of good practices. Usually, classroom visits are short, some more organized than others. Teachers can clearly distinguish themselves if all the program components are present, even though many objects on the walls and around the classroom are not used consistently for instruction. Many DLBE models have student-generated alphabets with multiple word walls in both target languages and classroom labels. I had always considered these components busy work, which provided little added value for the effort is to produce when not used for learning.

Every educator has a paradigm that differs in goals, objectives, and bilingualism. Each interpretation of what is to be bilingual and the program’s objectives inform our practice and what is being implemented, monitored, tested, and reported to mark progress—witnessing the inconsistency in using the target languages, tending to ignore the language allocation guidelines because students would be testing in one language—dismissively justifying teaching only in Spanish. The perceived lack of time and the amount of educational material needed would not allow instruction in both languages. Educators’ ideologies on language, race, and culture, in general, inform the way educators approach education. Ideologies, including those about language, are derived from specific evaluative frameworks. My experience with language oppression was in elementary school, where we could not speak Spanish in or outside the classroom. We were scolded and sent to the principal’s office. Later as a first-grade bilingual teacher, I was forced to transition kids at the end of the first six weeks of school. Just as my students were learning to read in their native language, it was taken away from them, and they were forced to change from Spanish to English instruction with ESL Support. After two years of doing this and seeing the children struggle with reading, writing, and content knowledge, I decided that it had to stop. I approached my principal with research on second language learners. I told her I could no longer do the injustice of holding these children back from learning to read and shielding them from systematic language oppression. After some discussion, she agreed to let me move forward and keep the Spanish instruction for the whole school year. Ultimately, it was the best thing for my kids as they all were reading on level and writing in English. The following year we implemented

a dual language program at my school. This episode supports the notion that language is curricularized; it is no longer a social process; it is divided into curriculum abilities promoted through controlled experiences (Valdes 2015).

The manner in which decisions are taken within the learning experience and curriculum is derived from the value systems we subscribe to. Realizing the answer to these concepts will provide awareness of how decisions will influence and affect the schooling experience. (Huebner 1966). Carse (1986) explains that we often operate under certain mindsets following preconceived scripts; everybody assumes all are constrained within the boundaries and behave accordingly. The schooling experience becomes a series of learning activities that are selected depending on what values system is being used by the person guiding each level of the learning experience. Under our own volition, can we break the spell since it is a self-imposed parameter derived from our process and understanding being misguided by ideologies rooted in the English hegemony. Hidden within these cultural scripts are our predispositions, biases, preconceptions, and even our prejudices that can go on continually unchecked if we do not intentionally reflect and review our behaviors, including those related to teaching. Unchecked, these cultural scripts and majoritarian stories perpetuate inequality and create an unequal space for everyone (Viesca and Gray 2021). As educators, we learn strategies and skills but also need to know how to adjust our paradigms on the topic. We should speak up and advocate and incite change for what is suitable for our teaching demographics. We must help educate the administration on what research has proven and the importance of the role native language plays in second language acquisition.

The schooling experience is a system already in motion regardless of our own emotions and belief systems. We manage to produce and deliver promising outcomes for some students. As educators, we can influence student learning through our involvement and academic language models. We can take the first step to break the spell and adopt a different stand of our own volition. An awareness of what kind of decisions and choices are being made is essential to understand the impact of one's decisions. This appreciation and realization are what Huebner (1966) refers to as the power or influence educators have on intervening in the life of others.

Moreover, this power alters the learning experience by not making it conflict-free; making decisions must be made with somber trepidation. This perspective will decenter and erode the power of the current status quo and the Western English hegemony. We can consider diverse epistemological platforms scrutinizing methods, their validity, and scope with the forewarning of not sinking into a self-justifying position of predilection by denying frameworks based on provenance or renegade the systems of knowledge proven and confirmed by the sciences. It is possible adopting the position beyond the dealing of the ultimatums demanded by the contradictions within the experience tapping into the decentralized network of knowledge, borrowing what is needed, and expanding such network by adding the understanding gained. (Paraskeva 2016).

## Contributors:

**Jose Orozco**, K-12 Public School Administrator and Dual Language Educator, Texas.

**Michael Whitacre**, Bilingual EC-6 Program Coordinator/Associate Professor Department of Bilingual and Literacy Studies, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley.

## CONTACT:

Jose Orozco <jose.orozco07@utrgv.edu>

Michael Whitacre <michael.whitacre@utrgv.edu>

## REFERENCE LIST

Bernstein, Katie A., Alvarez, Adriana, Chaparro, Sofia and Henderson, Kathryn I. “‘We Live in the Age of Choice’: School Administrators, School Choice Policies, and the Shaping of Dual Language Bilingual Education.” *Language Policy* 20, no. 3 (February 2021): 383–412. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10993-021-09578-0>.

Carse, James. *Finite and Infinite Games*. 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, Free Press, 1986

Huebner, Dwayne. Curricular Language, and Classroom Meanings. In Dwayne Huebner, Dwayne Huebner, Vikki Hillis, William F. Pinar *The Lure of the Transcendent*, 1st Edition, 1966, First published 1999 <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203053706>

Janson, Elizabeth, and Silva, Carmelia Motta. “Itinerant Curriculum Theory: Navigating the Waters of Power, Identity, and Praxis.” *Journal of the American Association for the Advancement of Curriculum Studies, Summer, Vol. 12(1)* (2017). <https://doi.org/10.14288/jaaacs.v12i1.189711>

Janson, Elizabeth, and Carmelia Motta Silva. 2017. “Itinerant Curriculum Theory: Navigating the Waters of Power, Identity, and Praxis.” *Journal of the American Association for the Advancement of Curriculum Studies (JAAACS)* 12 (1). <https://doi.org/10.14288/jaaacs.v12i1.189711>

McLaren, Peter. Critical pedagogy: A look at the major concepts. In Antonia Darder et al. (Eds.), *The critical pedagogy reader* (pp. 69-96). New York and London: Routledge/Falmer. (2002)

Moreira, Maria Alfredo. “‘And the Linguistic Minorities Suffer What They Must?’: A Review of Conflicts in Curriculum Theory through the Lenses of Language Teacher Education?” *Journal of the American Association for the Advancement of Curriculum Studies (JAAACS)* 12 (1). (August 2017) <https://doi.org/10.14288/JAAACS.V12I1.189710>

Paraskeva, João M. *Curriculum Epistemicide: Towards An Itinerant Curriculum Theory* (Copyright 2016, Routledge, 2019).

Guadalupe Valdés Latin@s and the Intergenerational Continuity of Spanish: The Challenges of Curricularizing Language, *International Multilingual Research Journal*, 9:4, 253-273, (November 2015) <https://doi.org/10.1080/19313152.2015.1086625>

Viesca, Kara Mitchell, & Gray, Tricia. Disrupting evasion pedagogies. *Journal of Language, Identity & Education*, 20(3), 213–220 (June 2021).  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/15348458.2021.1893173>