

“It Plays a Huge Role”: Examining Dual Language Teachers’ Conceptions of Language, Culture & Sociocultural Competence

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Abstract : Language and culture mutually shape and reflect the human experience. In the learning process, this connection creates and sustains the shared world of learners and educators. Dual Language (DL) programs exemplify this relationship by placing language and culture at the center of their educational approach. These programs, originally conceived to advance social justice in education, aim to foster bilingualism, biliteracy, academic development and sociocultural competence, emphasizing the inseparability of linguistic and cultural growth. Furthermore, because DL programs serve children from diverse cultural, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds, they operate as spaces where linguistic skills and sociocultural understandings are actively cultivated, negotiated, and celebrated. Against this background, this paper examines how two DL teachers see language and culture shaping and reflecting the educational experience, and how their understandings of the relationship influence their mediation of sociocultural competence in their classrooms. This qualitative study employs critical discourse analysis to study in detail participants’ narratives seeking to uncover their perspectives on the “politics” surrounding language use and cultural understandings in their school contexts. Our findings show that these educators are not only keenly aware of the pivotal role that language and culture play in multilingual students’ learning journeys, but they have identified the sociolinguistic “games” taking place in their classrooms. We contend these understandings are pivotal for the critical development of sociocultural competence in DL programs. This study provides DL educators with important conceptual and pedagogical insights regarding the intersection between language and culture in their classrooms and seeks to encourage them to analyze their roles as supporters or opponents of transformative rupture opportunities to contest inequities in education

Keywords : sociocultural competence, critical discourse analysis, dual language programs, language, culture

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