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Sunday, March 8<sup>th</sup>: 10:45-11:15

Language Planning Through Bilingual Education: New Mexico & New Brunswick

Nearly all bilingual societies rely on a certain amount of language planning to maintain and promote bilingualism. One facet of language planning is bilingual education programs. When implemented effectively, these programs serve to elevate the status of minority languages and of the students who are native speakers of these languages. The result is an environment of educational equity and an outcome of additive bilingualism for all students. Given that bilingual education can be implemented in a variety of ways, a comparative case study was conducted of two bilingual societies' programs in hopes of learning how their varying socio-politics affects the implementation of bilingual programs and which practices most effectively promote educational equity and additive bilingualism.

New Mexico's Dual Language Program and New Brunswick's Early French Immersion serve as the primary programs of comparison. One month of field research was conducted in both locations during which extensive classroom observation and interviews with parents, teachers, administrators, academics, legislators, and policy makers were conducted. Results indicate New Mexico's open-ended language policy of "English-Plus" fosters a sentiment of communal responsibility for language preservation and promotion resulting in bottom-up, community-driven implementation of two-way bilingual programs. On the other hand New Brunswick's educational policy of "Duality," designed to preserve the French language through institutional independence, results in top-down, province-dictated implementation of one way bilingual programs. Of the two locations, the programs that promote the most additive bilingualism were more often found in New Mexico where community support and program participation by both language communities is robust. Successful language planning in a bilingual society requires the participation and motivation of all language communities.