

The American Way of Bilingual Education: Based on On-Line Research



Yoshihiro Omura

Introduction

The field of English as a second language (ESL) teaching and learning has been affected by several related areas including various fields of linguistics (i.e., applied linguistics, sociolinguistics, and psycholinguistics, etc.), various fields of education (i.e., bilingual education, foreign language education, curriculum and instruction, etc.), psychology, sociology, anthropology, and politics. The field of teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL) is often considered interdisciplinary, and the academic department to which TESOL degrees belong is different from university to university. For example, the TESOL program is part of the foreign language department at West Virginia University, while the TESOL program belongs to the education department at the University of Texas at Austin.

Among other fields, bilingual education offers invaluable insights into TESOL and it is natural for any ESL instructor/researcher to become interested in bilingual education. This connection is undeniably obvious when one sees the fact that Stephen Krashen, once the most influential ESL researcher, is now one of the most prominent theoretical advocates of bilingual education. The goal of TESOL can be considered similar to that of bilingual education in that they both try to educate learners to be able to communicate in multiple languages. Thus, this paper will give an overview and analyze various topics of today's bilingual education in the US, focusing on the history and language policy in the United States and touching on global trends in bilingualism. The United States seems to be moving in the direction to limit the number of bilingual programs, converting dual language bilingual programs into transitional programs.

In conducting research on a topic like this one with many recent developments, the usefulness of on-line resources is unquestionable. As will be illustrated below, printed journals and books cannot provide readers with up-to-date information and

discussion soon enough, especially when the situation changes suddenly. In the case of bilingual education in the United States, the changing laws and language policies have forced educators and school districts to adopt new policies more than once in the last decade. Therefore, this paper is structured mostly based on on-line journals, websites, and documents to better keep up with the current topic; the direction of bilingual education in the United States. Some of the most useful on-line journals and websites are Rethinking Schools Online (<http://www.rethinkingschools.org/>), Center for Applied Linguistics (<http://www.cal.org/>), Wikipedia (<http://en.wikipedia.org/>), and Education Resources Information Center (<http://www.eric.ed.gov/>). Online resources, though they are swift and satisfying for the most part, have their drawbacks. Because of the virtual nature of online resources, sometimes their presence is not permanent: they can be moved or deleted and it is possible that one cannot (re)locate the information. In addition, online information does not follow any strict format, and thus, sometimes the author's name is not clearly indicated. Still, solid research is doable based mostly on on-line information as long as one carefully chooses resources and verifies them.

Overview

Bilingual education is designed to achieve second language fluency, but its scope varies from place to place. In a few countries, bilingual education is universal in all schools, like in Brunei, where instruction is given in both Malay and English. In most countries, however, bilingual programs are offered to accommodate the needs of immigrant children.

According to Brisk, "there are four major types of bilingual programs: dual language; language switch; Canadian Immersion; and transitional bilingual education (p. 312)." Dual language programs use two languages throughout the program two types of which are two-way immersion and language maintenance programs. Two-way immersion programs combine students from two language groups and the instruction is given in both languages. Two-way immersion programs give opportunity to participants to develop high levels of first and second language proficiency. Some private schools and charter schools employ this format in the United States. Language maintenance programs are often seen at schools where most students are from language minority

groups like Native-Americans. Students are given instruction in the native language as well as in English so that they will not forget their native language.

In language switch programs, the language of instruction is switched after a few years. For example, in Luxemburg, most children start school in Luxemburger, but it is switched to German after a few years. While students receive instruction in German, they start taking French as a subject. Again, the language of instruction is changed from German to French in high school. Thus, all the students usually acquire three languages in the course of schooling.

Canadian immersion programs were developed for English-speaking children living in French-speaking communities to acquire French. Since Canadian immersion programs have become so well-known, the word 'immersion' reminds most bilingual educators of Canadian programs. Canadian immersion programs have early immersion programs and late immersion programs. In early immersion programs, on the other hand, students start school in French (i.e., their second language) and French will be the sole language of instruction for three years. Then, English (i.e., their first language) is slowly introduced, and English becomes to occupy 70% of instruction by the end of secondary school. In late immersion programs, students start school in English with French taught as a subject. By the end of the elementary school, French becomes the only language of instruction for two years. After that, English is slowly reintroduced.

Transitional programs "have the goal of assimilation and social incorporation of language minorities in the national society through language shift. Linguistically, the aim of this model is monolingualism (Stroud, p. 26)." Such programs are found where bilingual education is necessary to help students who do not speak the official or national language. "The language outcome [of transitional bilingual programs] is subtractive bilingualism because students learn a second language but lose or do not develop their home language (Brisk, p. 312)." A large number of bilingual programs for immigrants are this type of transitional programs in that learners need to acquire the target language as quickly as possible in order to have successful academic, social or work life.

Based on the above four classification of bilingual programs, most bilingual education in the United States are transitional programs including the bilingual programs under the newly enacted No Child Left Behind policy (See the next section for details.).

which limits students to only three years of education. A few dual language programs are available and some bilingual immersion charter schools exist which offer two-way immersion programs.

History

“The need for competency in more than one language has probably never been greater than at the turn of the third millennium. This is the result of a variety of factors, including, globalization of business, commerce and entertainment, massive population shifts of people from different ethnolinguistic backgrounds, rapid urbanization, and cheaper and faster means of international travel and communication” (Li et al., p. 1). One would think being bilingual is a tremendous advantage in the international employment market, however, bilingual education has experienced both ups and downs in the last four decades in the United States.

Overall bilingual education has received extensive support and, after the Bilingual Education Act of 1968 was established, a number of official government programs were established. Its history, however, goes back to the early 19th century, when earlier immigrants sent their children to bilingual schools.

In 1839, Ohio became the first state to adopt a bilingual education law, authorizing German-English instruction at parents' request. Louisiana enacted an identical provision for French and English in 1847, and the New Mexico Territory did so for Spanish and English in 1850. By the end of the 19th century, about a dozen states had passed similar laws. Elsewhere, many localities provided bilingual instruction without state sanction, in languages as diverse as Norwegian, Italian, Polish, Czech, and Cherokee. (National Association of Bilingual Education)

However, language diversity was not always seen as a positive social step and an English-only movement erupted in various parts of the United States. In the early 1900s, the United States had tried to impose an English-only policy on French speakers in Louisiana, Spanish speakers in California, Native-Americans, Hawaiians, and Puerto Ricans. This English-only movement, translating into an anti-bilingual education sentiment, was further boosted when politicians stirred up fears about the loyalty of non-English speakers during World War I at which time many states established English-

only instruction laws. As Crawford (2000b, p.21) states, “[l]inguistic uniformity was seen as essential to rooting out alien conspiracies and containing a radical labor movement. It was during this period, for the first time, that an ideological link was established between speaking ‘good English’ and being a ‘good American.’”

This English-only trend continued until the failure of limited English proficiency (LEP) students could not be ignored any longer. The Bilingual Education Act of 1968, introduced in 1967 by Texas senator Ralph Yarborough, passed when immigration and civil rights movements throughout American society were growing. The bill was originally intended for Spanish-speaking students, but in 1968 it was merged into the Bilingual Education Act, the purpose of which was to provide school districts with federal funds to establish educational programs for LEP students. The Bilingual Education Act of 1968, or Title VII, of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), was the first piece of United States federal legislation relating to minority language speakers.

The 1968 Bilingual Education Act has undergone many changes, reflecting the needs of the limited English proficient student population in the United States. It has evolved from offering only basic guidelines to providing more concrete regulations and encouraging greater local control of program curricula. Thus, each state and school district operates various types of programs to suit their specific local needs. For example, in the state of the Texas, Texas Education Agency (TEA) defines the establishment of bilingual education as follows:

- (a) The agency shall establish a procedure for identifying school districts that are required to offer bilingual education and special language programs in accordance with this subchapter.
- (b) Within the first four weeks following the first day of school, the language proficiency assessment committee established under Section 29.063 shall determine and report to the board of trustees of the district the number of students of limited English proficiency on each campus and shall classify each student according to the language in which the student possesses primary proficiency. The board shall report that information to the agency before November 1 each year.
- (c) Each district with an enrollment of 20 or more students of limited English proficiency in any language classification in the same grade level shall offer a

bilingual education or special language program.

(d) Each district that is required to offer bilingual education and special language programs under this section shall offer the following for students of limited English proficiency:

- (1) bilingual education in kindergarten through the elementary grades;
- (2) bilingual education, instruction in English as a second language, or other transitional language instruction approved by the agency in post-elementary grades through grade 8; and
- (3) instruction in English as a second language in grades 9 through 12.

(Texas Education Code 29.053)

In short, any school with more than 20 LEP students with the same native language in the same grade level must offer a bilingual program in Texas. This researcher has seen many bilingual programs offered in Texas: Spanish-English, Vietnamese-English, and Tagalog-English. The Bilingual Education Act was supporting and guiding school districts to provide LEP students with a variety of bilingual and ESL programs so that they can acquire adequate English proficiency to succeed in academic life (See the next section for detailed bilingual programs). This trend, however, was challenged by English-only advocates in California in 1997.

In November 1997 anti-bilingual activists, led by Ron Unz, in CA had collected enough petitions from registered voters to qualify an initiative that mandated English only instruction in public schools for the June 2 primary ballot. In June 1998, these voters approved the measure, called Proposition 227 (See Appendix 1 for Summary). This new law “has been disruptive for schools, confusing for teachers, and traumatic for students. While its implementation varies from district to district, this year English learners are getting far less help in their native tongues (Crawford, 1998).” LEP students were expected to be taught only in English only for one year after which they would be transferred to mainstream classrooms in what Proposition 227 calls “sheltered English immersion programs.” Proposition 227 has had the impact of practically killing all successful bilingual classes. It is feared that, under Proposition 227, more bilingual programs will be axed in school districts where the majority are not LEP students, and thus.

Following the approval in California, Unz campaigned for English-only schooling in Arizona and it became the second state to adopt an English-only policy. Arizona's Proposition 203, which was created based on a California's Proposition 227 of 1998, was aimed at banning all the bilingual education for LEP students. In Arizona, Proposition 203 affected not only immigrants but also a large number of Native-American students learning tribal languages. According to Crawford (1998), "similar efforts are possible in other states that make laws by ballot initiative, such as Colorado, Washington, and Massachusetts". Indeed, similar campaigns were introduced in Colorado and Massachusetts. Massachusetts passed the same kind of policy, called Question 2, becoming the third state to ban bilingual education in 2002, but Colorado voters rejected a similar measure.

Despite the English-only movement, some school districts in California have managed to continue a bilingual program in one form or another. Miner illustrates two types of directions which school districts can take to continue to offer bilingual programs. One is for a school to take advantage of "what some consider a loophole in Proposition 227, which allows parents to sign a waiver and demand their child receive a bilingual education (Miner)". Proposition 227, Article 3: Parental Exceptions 311 (c) reads as follows:

Children with special needs: the child already has been placed for a period of not less than thirty days during that school year in an English language classroom and it is subsequently the informed belief of the school principal and educational staff that the child has such special physical, emotional, psychological, or educational needs that an alternate course of educational study would be better suited to the child's overall educational development. ...

In other words, after waiting for 30 days, parents can place their child in a bilingual program, which was what happened at Starlight Elementary school in Watsonville, CA, where 80 % of the students are Hispanic. The overwhelming majority of Starlight parents chose to do so (Miner)." Starlight feared that their students would never be able to succeed in academic life if bilingual programs ceased to exist.

Another course a school can take is to choose to become a charter school. "Charter schools are publicly funded elementary or secondary schools in the United States

which have been freed from some of the rules, regulations, and statutes that apply to other public schools, in exchange for some type of accountability for producing certain results, which are set forth in each charter school's charter (Wikipedia).” Education Commission of the States (ECS) denotes that charter schools receive “automatic waiver from most state laws, regulations and policies governing school districts in California”. In other words, a public school can choose to become a charter school which specializes in a bilingual program, which is what happened at Alianza elementary school, another Watsonville school. “Alianza, [where 90% of the students are Hispanic], worried about losing a month of bilingual education, chose to become a charter school and circumvent Proposition 227's mandates (Miner).” Today, Alianza is one of the most prominent bilingual immersion charter schools and it has added middle school, serving students from kindergarten through the 8th grade. In one of these ways, “nearly 170,000 students, or 12 percent of English learners, have won the right to continue in bilingual classrooms (Crawford, 2000a).” In order to avoid the way California Proposition 227 was loosely interpreted, however, Arizona Proposition 203 was made tougher, mandating English-only instruction to all students under age 10 and allowing parental waiver requests to be denied without explanation.

Finally, a near fatal blow to end bilingual education came from the federal government in 2002. The Bilingual Education Act of 1968 was “eliminated as part of a larger school reform measure known as No Child Left Behind (NCLB), proposed by the Bush administration (Crawford, 2002).”

George W. Bush, three days after taking office in January 2001 as the 43rd President of the United States, announced that “[t]hese reforms express my deep belief in our public schools and their mission to build the mind and character of every child, from every background, in every part of America.” President Bush emphasized his deep belief in public schools, but an even greater concern that “too many of our neediest children are being left behind (ibid.).” The framework includes “increased accountability for states, school districts, and schools; greater choice for parents and students, particularly those attending low-performing schools; more flexibility for states and local educational agencies (LEAs) in the use of Federal education dollars; and a stronger emphasis on reading, especially for our youngest children (ibid.).”

NCLB is a plan to improve public schools in the United States by implementing various new policies. For example, it requires all the students to take annual tests in reading and math in order to see if each school has achieved Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), set by the state. These requirements, however, pose a tremendous challenge to some schools because of the following two criteria:

1. A single statewide accountability system is applied to all public schools and LEAs.
2. All public school students are included in the state accountability system.

Since the economic and demographic makeup of school districts is diverse in the United States, there are areas at both extremes of achievement, poor and exceptional. In wealthy school districts, schools tend to be high achieving, while in economically disadvantaged districts, for example, where new immigrant flow is frequent, high academic achievement is not normally realized. In such areas, even new immigrant children have to be included in reading and math tests, and thus, high academic achievement for the school district as a whole is unlikely. In addition to these, as Krashen (2001) explains, the “most significant feature of President Bush’s new plan for bilingual education is the requirement that there be a three-year limit on bilingual education” (See Appendix II). Most educators agree that it is unrealistic for all the immigrant children to master four skills of English language in less than three years. Still, NCLB mandates that all the bilingual education should not exceed three years for any child. It “encourages schools to abandon native-language instruction in favor of all-English approaches (Crawford, in press).” Then, what happens to the English-speaking students who are enrolled in bilingual programs, hoping to acquire another foreign language? “Numerous studies show that those who develop both languages to a high degree have cognitive advantages (Krashen, 2001)”, but they may lose this tremendous opportunity to learn a foreign language in an ideal two-way bilingual setting. Today, it seems that the only possibility for a continuing bilingual program to survive in the United States is to turn the school into a bilingual charter school and that is the path a number of schools have chosen to follow.

The NCLB policy has affected not only the programs but also funding. The competitive grant system under Title VII of Bilingual Education Act included a measure

of quality control. Only the best projects, as judged by a panel of experts, received federal funding. Now Title III funding of NCLB is distributed on a simple per capita basis. The needy schools are not receiving enough funding under NCLB. In addition, limited financial allocation on teacher training poses a tough challenge, too.

How has the enrollment in bilingual education changed since the passage of English-only policy in California, Arizona, and Massachusetts? In Arizona, one-third of English language learners were enrolled in bilingual education before Proposition 203 in 2000, but bilingual education has not been available as of 2005. In Massachusetts, 23% of the state's English learners were in bilingual education programs before Question 2 in 2002, but only 5% by 2005. In California, 29% of English learners were enrolled in bilingual programs before Proposition 227, but it went down to only 6% by 2006 (The figures were taken from Salas and Crawford, in press).

Is this decline of bilingual education seen only in the United States or is it a global trend? In the United States, most bilingual programs are now transitional programs, providing LEP learners with only up to three years of instruction. Many other countries are providing similar programs (See Table 1).

Table 1: A few examples of transitional bilingual programs in the world

Country	First language	Period
The Netherlands	Turkish, Moroccan	2 years
England	Punjabi	1 year
Sweden	Arabic, Bosnian, Croatian, Serbian	4 years

However, in today's ever-moving world, being able to communicate in multiple languages is becoming not only advantageous but also necessary. In fact, in many parts of the world, multilingualism is a norm, where several languages are used in daily life due to "the linguistic heterogeneity of a country, the desire to promote national identity" (Tucker), or recent movement of immigrants. Therefore, bilingual education programs are abundant and they are shown to work well. Krashen (1998) illustrates bilingual education programs for immigrant children and indigenous minorities. Since the establishment of the European Union, many different language groups have moved

to many different countries. For instance, "about 120 languages have been reported as mother tongues among the children in the Swedish basic school during recent years (Mercator Education, p. 41)." Sweden has three major regional languages: Swedish and two types of Finnish, and many immigrants' languages such as Arabic, Polish, Bosnian, Croatian, Serbian, etc. Although bilingual programs for indigenous minorities are disappearing in the United States, such programs are maintained in China, Australia, and Mexico (See Table 2).

Table 2: Examples of bilingual programs for indigenous minorities (Krashen, Do other...)

Country	First language	Results
China	Korean	More Korean speakers obtain higher education degrees than speakers of Mandarin
Australia	Gapapuyngu	Bilinguals outperform all-English in grade 7 in math and English composition.
Mexico	Tzeltal, Tzotzil	Better Spanish reading

Similar to language maintenance programs, language revival programs are also found in New Zealand (Maori) and Wales (Welsh) for those who speak the official language (i.e., English) as their first language.

Just like the successful two-way immersion bilingual programs in the United States, such programs can be seen around the globe. In addition to the above mentioned Finnish programs in Sweden, Glenn (p. 452) describes such examples as Denmark (Turkish), Belgium (Spanish), and Germany (Turkish, Greek). Krashen adds more examples as follows: the Netherlands (Frisian), Denmark (German), France (Portuguese, Arabic). Thus, not only the transitional programs, but also other three types of bilingual programs are going strong in the world.

Summary

With the implementation of the No Child Left Behind policy as well as the recent English-only movement, the United States has been moving in the direction to convert dual language bilingual programs into transitional programs. While it is of utmost

priority to assist LEP students to acquire adequate communicative proficiency in English, it is doubtful whether it is worth doing so at the cost of their first language, cultural heritage, and pride in their native language. Early exit bilingual programs might give LEP students with necessary English skills, but it is feared that these students may lose the opportunity to truly become bilingual and bi-cultural global citizens in the long run, resulting in the United States losing invaluable future asset. The outcome and impact of the NCLB Act is yet to be seen, and thus, it is too early to discuss the effectiveness of the policy. NCLB has affected and changed bilingual education a great deal: teacher training, programs, funding, etc. NCLB, however, is just born and will go through a number of changes to better serve the needy children. For example, "due to complaints, the Education Department eased the test assessment requirement in February 2004, saying schools did not have to include the test results of some LEP students during their first year of enrollment (PBS)." In the meantime, bilingual educators and school districts need to make further efforts to verify and convey the effectiveness and benefits of bilingual education. It is sincerely hoped that one day students can freely choose any form of bilingual program in order not only to develop their linguistic and cognitive skills, but also their richness as a human being.

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Appendix 1: Summary of Proposition 227

ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS.
INITIATIVE STATUTE.

- Requires all public school instruction be conducted in English.
- Requirement may be waived if parents or guardian show that child already knows English, or has special needs, or would learn English faster through alternate instructional technique.
- Provides initial short-term placement, not normally exceeding one year, in intensive sheltered English immersion programs for children not fluent in English.
- Appropriates \$50 million per year for ten years funding English instruction for individuals pledging to provide personal English tutoring to children in their community.
- Permits enforcement suits by parents and guardians.

Appendix II: Overview of Title III of No Child Left Behind

One of America's greatest attributes is our diversity. Ensuring that all children, regardless of background, have the chance to succeed is a central purpose of the federal role in education. The changes that our schools have witnessed over the last decade have created new challenges to teaching and learning. All parents want their children to graduate with the basic tools needed to work and succeed in today's global marketplace. For the more than 3 million Limited English Proficient (LEP) students in America, this means learning English in school.

Unfortunately, there are indications that LEP students are not receiving the services they need to make this transition. For example, research has shown that English language learners, when compared with their English-fluent peers, tend to receive lower grades and often score below the average on standardized math and reading assessments. This is partly because federal funding for bilingual education currently has no performance measures attached to it. Our proposal will give districts more flexibility in using bilingual funds in exchange for effectively transitioning

LEP students into English fluency and improving their achievement.

In order for all students to meet high standards, limited English proficient (LEP) students need to master English as quickly as possible. To accomplish this goal, states and school districts will be held accountable for making annual increases in English proficiency from the previous year. *Moreover, they will be required to teach children in English after three consecutive years of being in school.* (Underline added by the researcher)