

A FEARFUL NATION'S WAR ON BILINGUAL EDUCATION: A HISTORICAL AND SOCIO-POLITICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

Americans have a long history of subjugating and under-educating immigrant children, especially those who do not speak English fluently. This paper reviews some historic evidence that demonstrates a bias against non-native English speakers, both culturally and linguistically. Second Language Acquisition Research indicates that given a cooperative, enrichment-based learning environment, respect, and time, English Language Learners can acquire academic proficiency. Despite strong research and the national call for bilingual/biliterate citizens, America's cultural war against immigrants and the education of their children continues in current times. This paper discusses the education and treatment in the U.S. of immigrants, some of our traditional ideologies, and our nation's current public and political discourse with regard to the future of bilingual education.

Dedication

I would be remiss to fail to acknowledge the fine instruction I received regarding bilingual education and social justice issues from Drs. Cindy McPhail and David McGough during my Masters Program at Nazareth College of Rochester. Their keen insights and pedagogical guidance have proven instrumental to enriching my worldview; and I will always feel indebted to them because of it. To Miriam Ehtesham, my advisor, mentor and ever faithful guide through the quagmire of Linguistics, Second Language Acquisition Theory, Methods and Literacy for English Language Learners: Miriam, you have changed my life forever!

Simply put, there is ample research indicating that an equal access education requires much more than 1 year of English Immersion classes in order for English Language Learners (“ELLs”) to be successful. Additionally, my own experiences as a second language learner, and school district translator for nearly 11 years have established my firm belief in the need for quality bilingual education. Yet, there is a strong and growing trend to eliminate bilingual education in our country, as seen in the Unz initiatives that have passed in California, Arizona, and Massachusetts.

It was not all that long ago that civil rights, equal opportunity and social justice for all were in the forefront of many American’s minds. In light of the results of the Unz initiatives, one might very well ask “*What ever happened to social justice and educational equal access?*”

Theobald (1997) explains that Americans have been taught to look primarily to the future and that “living in the past” has taken on a derogatory connotation, intended to devalue those who look to history for insight. He claims that this disdain for a historical frame of reference has created some serious flaws in our culture and

a distressingly shallow American character...When the past is defined as unimportant, it no longer burdens. “I didn’t kill any Indians”...”I’ve never owned any slaves.” These comments, though true enough, ignore the fact that the results brought on by those who *did* do such things continue to stare us in the face. The cultural healing that needs to come about in this society will take place only when we garner the character necessary to shoulder the legacy our ancestors left us. Unfortunately, in a culture unaccustomed to looking to the past, problems associated with looking to the future accumulate and intensify. (p. 48-49)

Thus, in order to understand how we have arrived at our current public discourse on bilingual education, we first must look at some

of America's history and traditional ideologies as they relate to our national ambivalence toward immigrants (especially those who speak languages other than English).

Also, one needs to point out that immigrant history in the U.S. somewhat parallels African American subjugation, poverty, and the Ebonics debate. However, of necessity, this paper will limit its focus to the needs of ELLs in America, and primarily to Hispanics, who overwhelmingly make up the majority of the nation's ESOL (English to Speakers of Other Languages) and bilingual education classrooms. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that the National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education (Lindholm-Leary, 2000) documents the existence of bilingual education programs in Cantonese, Korean, French, Navajo, Japanese, Arabic, Portuguese, and Russian, as well as 240 such programs in Spanish.

II. HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS:

According to Lessow-Hurley (2000), even as early as the writing of the United States Constitution, its authors made the conscious decision not to establish an official national language. Even the Continental Congress made sure to publish many of its documents in several other languages (German and French, for example), in order to assure that the large linguistic minorities would have equal access to its proceedings (Crawford, 1991). This original egalitarian approach, according to Theobald (1997), would soon begin to change as John Locke's philosophy of unrestrained freedom for individuals to amass personal property and wealth became more and more ingrained in American thinking.

However, Lessow-Hurley (2000) states that modern Americans are generally surprised when they learn that dual-language instruction has been widely available throughout U.S. history. This was especially true in the 19th Century when ten different European languages, in addition to some Native American languages, were used in dual-language instruction in over twelve states. In fact, at one time the Cherokee

language had its own writing system, created by a Cherokee named Sequoyah. "As a result, bilingual materials were widely available, and by 1852 Oklahoma Cherokees had a higher English literacy level than the white population of either Texas or Arkansas" (Castellanos, 1983; in Lessow-Hurley, 2000, p. 5). It was not until the federal government decided that well-educated Native Americans might become a threat to white civilization, during the post-Civil War era, that the last remaining Indian School Systems were eradicated (Weinburg, 1997, in Lessow-Hurley, 2000). During this same era, Native American families were being torn apart and their culture was seriously disrupted by the forced removal of their children to mission boarding schools to Americanize (civilize) them. If a Native American child was found speaking a word of their native language, they were often beaten or chained to a post for long hours as punishment. To insure that native people would not surpass white settlers educationally, the U.S. Government proceeded to forcibly confiscate the Cherokee printing press used to produce their educational materials. Look for it the next time you visit the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C.

the pretexts for imposing English on Native Americans pioneered a range of now familiar arguments...need for a common language (sameness of language produces sameness of mind);...civilizing the 'barbarous'; and the role of English as a patriotic symbol (spreading 'superior' American institutions)...But none could mask the prime objectives: military conquest, expropriation of Indian lands, and removal of unwanted peoples. (Crawford, 2000, p. 16)

Crawford (2000) also alludes to the fact that the enforced use of English, and the cultural subjugation of Native Americans, may have been viewed as the *only* viable method for teaching and civilizing them. The government's reasoning can be seen clearly in the words of Commissioner Atkins regarding the use of Native American *languages*: "they are *worse than useless*...a means of... keeping them in their savage condition by perpetuating the traditions of carnage and superstition" (p. 68-69). In keeping with the colonialist ideology of

the day, citizens may well have felt it their right as conquerors and perhaps even their national duty to support a system that reinforced an excoriating racism and imposed both cultural and linguistic subjugation on Native Americans.

Flores and Murillo (2001) provide us with another example, regarding the education of Mexican bilinguals in the Southwest after the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848. Prior to Guadalupe Hidalgo, the Mexican people had been highly involved in the educational and governmental arenas of the area:

All of this began to change when Anglo bureaucrats realized that the schools were not Americanizing the Mexican population fast enough. The first step...removing local control from the Mexican community ...due to concerted efforts by Anglo officials...{Mexican participation was eroded} and Spanish was....extirpated from the educational institutions...the primary goals...Anglo purity, the consolidation of the nation through establishment of a common culture and a common language, and preservation of white political power (p. 192).

The arguments used to support these two examples of forced assimilation upon people of other languages and cultures must be viewed critically. More specifically, I am referring to the issues of not assimilating fast enough (the social, educational and economic inconvenience to whites) and the enforced use of English in all arenas (in order to prevent whites and white culture from attaining minority status in a region). All other voices were summarily rejected as meaningless and worthless. These arguments are nearly identical to current marginalization discourse in the U.S.; an issue that we will come back to later.

In 1917, Teddy Roosevelt gave his famous speech regarding bilinguals in America, as a direct reaction to the First World War:

We must have... but one language...cannot tolerate any

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attempt to oppose or supplant the language and culture that has come down to us from the builders of this Republic...Any force which attempts to retard that assimilative process is a force hostile to the highest interest of our country. (Flores & Murillo, 2001, p. 194)

As a result of this type of political rhetoric dominating the media of the day and backlash reactions to World War I, anti-immigrant sentiments swept the country. Crawford (1991) tells of a prime example that occurred in 1919, when one school superintendent led an angry mob that raided a bilingual school in Lima, Ohio to burn all the German textbooks. This was certainly not an isolated incident of linguistic subjugation, known as *linguicism* (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1988, in Flores & Murillo, 2001, p. 185), an element of a *xenophobic* mindset which fears anything foreign.

Anyon (1997), in her searing analysis of the deplorable state of urban education, also refers back to the early 1900's when poor immigrants were flooding American schools. (A situation similar to that in some western states today.) "Students faced a culturally unfamiliar curriculum (one intended to 'Americanize' them) and were taught in a language that they did not understand very well; in addition, some may have been taught by teachers who despised them" (p. 49). She speaks of horrific tales where, even though manufacturers were trying to *attract immigrant families as a cheap labor force, their school children were being beaten, insulted, forced to repeat grades over and over again, and were often labeled as retarded*. The majority of immigrant students eventually dropped out of school in favor of working as unskilled laborers. Yet, such "assimilation education" did little to educate *or* assimilate these students. Instead, Anyon tells us, many marginalized groups moved into enclaves of immigrants of similar circumstances that later would become poverty-stricken, stigmatized, redlined ghettos. I agree with the author when she says that sympathetic teachers and native language instruction may have made a huge difference for generations of poor immigrant children. The overwhelming majority of SLA researchers would agree (see,

for example, Collier, 1995; Gersten and Baker, 2000; Hakuta, 1998, Krashen, 2000).

Even so, modern Americans look back and *nostalgically* call this process the ‘melting pot’, the idea being that these methods were a wonderful way to turn our American society into the exemplary success that it is today! Most honest historians, however, would call this a romanticized remnant of an outdated colonialist ideology, one that severely marginalizes immigrants.

Worst of all, immigrants were slowly becoming viewed as taking needed jobs from their “true American” counterparts, a recurring theme since the depression era. According to Leistyna (2002)

The harsh reality is...the job opportunities that are intended for the majority of immigrants...consist of manual labor, cleaning crews,...the assembly line, and farm jobs that require little to no English - as with the Bracero Program (1942-1964), through which more than 4 million Mexican farm laborers were ‘legally brought’ into the United States...when the Bracero Program was finally dismantled, the U.S. Department of Labor officer heading the operation...described it as ‘legalized slavery’. (p. 345)

In other words, the idea that immigrants have been taking jobs from “true Americans” appears to be just another marginalization tactic, since most educated Americans would not even take such a manual labor-intensive job, if it were offered!

Michael Apple (2001) says

the suturing together of the needs and norms of the market and conservative views of appropriate character has a long history. *Fears* of economic decline, the loss of ‘genteel’ culture, of the loss of a common language and culture have constantly surfaced, often in times of market crisis and surges in immigration. (p. 21)

Lessow-Hurley (2000) states that with the launching of Sputnik by the Soviet Union and the subsequent fears of falling behind (losing sovereignty over) any other country, American education was re-evaluated and the National Defense Education Act (1958) was signed. After that the study of foreign languages was considered essential to national defense, and was once again federally funded. Only five years later, the Coral Way Elementary School in Dade County, Florida was established as a bilingual school for the children of Cuban refugees and middle class Americans. Thus, Coral Way became the precursor to modern-day Dual Immersion Bilingual Education.

Later, Jack Kennedy kept his promise to Eleanor Roosevelt to take a stand for the civil rights of minorities and women; and America struggled to enter a new age, with a rekindled consciousness of social justice. After Kennedy's assassination, President Johnson followed suit with his War on Poverty, which emphasized equality for all Americans, even for those of poverty, or of color. Americans struggled with social justice issues and desegregation issues nationwide. Eventually, civil rights were extended to culturally and linguistically diverse Americans and their educational needs. Thus, by 1968 the Bilingual Education Act was signed into law to provide for the special needs of ELLs (Lessow-Hurley, 2000).

By 1974, the Supreme Court heard the case of *Lau v. Nichols*, in which Chinese immigrant parents living in California claimed that their children were being denied an equal access education, as no language support was being provided to students who did not speak English. Herrera and Murry (1999) explain that this landmark case was one of many such cases that firmly established a student's language rights as civil rights. The educational civil rights of ELLs are clearly spelled out in the *Lau vs. Nichols* proceedings

There is no equality of treatment merely by providing students with the same facilities, textbooks, teachers, and curriculum; for students who do not understand English are effectively foreclosed from any meaningful educa-

tion...Imposition of a requirement that, before a child can effectively participate in the educational program he must have already acquired those basic skills is to make a mockery of public education...{making}their classroom experiences wholly incomprehensible and in no way meaningful. (*Lau v. Nichols*, 414, U.S. 563, 1974; Herrera and Murry, 1999, p. 181.)

As a result of this ruling, several bilingual education models were formed. SLA research was begun and a specialized pedagogy was formed, and it continues to evolve today. It is also important to note that bilingual education, when originally signed into law in America, was more an ideal or perhaps an experiment. Those governing officials who recognized the educational needs of ELLs and originally signed the act into law set no guidelines for such programs, as little research had been done in the U.S. on bilingual education up to that point. From then until the liberalization of immigration policy from the 1970s (as the post-Vietnam War refugees arrived) and forward, our society remained quasi-accepting of these new research-based educational programs for ELLs. That is, up until recently.

These changes in immigration policy from the 1970s-1990's brought significant demographic shifts to certain areas of the nation, especially some western and southwestern states, such as California and Arizona. School districts found themselves struggling with how to raise achievement scores on language-oriented standardized tests, when an ever-increasing percentage of their student population consisted of ELLs. Another crucial point is that Federal funding is often contingent upon what are considered acceptable standardized test scores for the entire school population. However, immigrant students often have insufficient command of academic English to perform well on standardized tests until after many years of study.

Mora (2002) adds that currently ESOL classrooms are often made up of a majority of Hispanics. "In California, for example, 82% of the students classified as limited English proficient are native Spanish

speakers who are learning English as a second language...” (p.31). The result is that ELLs, especially Hispanics, have become viewed as a liability for school rankings and as costing the taxpayer something extra. In other words, immigrant work is fine, *but their children cost too much!* Such students are often mislabeled and placed in Special Education or remedial classes, when what research says is that they need time and understandable, appropriate instruction.

Sadly, some of the traditional methods espoused by these programs have proven to be the least effective for attaining target language fluency and higher-level cognitive function. Observations I have made in my many years of working with ELLs and their families, as well as with school personnel, bare a striking, unequivocal witness to the veracity of these claims. Igoa (1998) also brings forth the point that sometimes educators need to think of using other teaching strategies with ELLs, such as those that she so successfully implemented through the use of art. In addition, I attended a seminar by Dr. Ellen Arnold on Multiple Intelligences at Nazareth College on November 17, 2002, after which we discussed how hard it has been for many young Hispanics I worked with to master the math concepts of the Comprehensive School Math Program (CSMP). I asked if that might be related to the great amount of linguistic knowledge required to understand those concepts, noting that many students I worked with came to school with a large portion of their background knowledge in the areas of “hands on” skills, music and art. Dr. Arnold’s reply was a resounding yes, and that I had made the same observations some of her research had.

In short, then, I feel safe to say that many American educators simply have not yet figured out that traditional American schooling methods, if they do not access a student’s Multiple Intelligence strategies, do not work well with some ELLs. These traditional methods can cause ELLs language loss, a delay in the development of higher level cognitive functioning and often leave students lagging behind for the entire school careers (Nieto, 2000).

Thus, one can see that a major shift has taken place in the public and political discourse in recent years regarding immigrants and the education of their children. Our nation has moved from a pro-Civil Rights and Equal Opportunity stance toward a decidedly more conservative, reactionary stance favoring that which the marketplace and traditional American ideology demand. Michael Apple (2001) calls this change in our society “consumer culture,” claiming that we as a nation have essentially moved away from social justice issues in our educational systems as well.

Unfortunately, Americans often consider those ELLs who retain their home language or accent as lacking intelligence, achievement potential and even lacking sufficient gratitude for being allowed to live in the U.S.! This paradigm judges immigrants wishing to become biliterate and bilingual even more harshly, because bilingualism tends to shift some of the *traditional balance of power away from white, middle class, monolingual American society*. These views, along with the fact that most Hispanics want their children to become totally bilingual Americans, have significantly fueled a strong, underlying anti-Hispanic sentiment currently evidenced across our nation.

Should there be any remaining doubts, you may want to read Cummins’s (1998) description of Diaz-Soto’s experiences in a Pennsylvania city named “Steel Town” and the proposed ordinance of posting of a “Blue E” in shop windows that was supposed to enforce English Only upon immigrants shopping in the town’s stores:

“if a store clerk detected an accent or felt that the buyer’s English was not up to par, they were expected to pay an additional 10 percent to 20 percent on their purchase... Supporters of this ordinance called the radio talk show, expressing such views as: “Send all the spics back”; “This is America...for whites only”; “Our city was better off without all of this trash” (Soto, 1996; in Cummins, 1998, p. 257).

During the 1990’s anti-immigrant referendums were repeatedly

brought up for vote in California, and with their passing, we began yet another era in American History. Apple (2001) says that Americans now feel a sense of “cultural pollution”, behind which lay a set of historical assumptions about “tradition”, about the existence of a social consensus over what should count as legitimate knowledge, and about cultural superiority” (p.48-49). This is the public and political climate in which Ron Unz’s “English for the Children” was created and in which the war on bilingual education is currently embroiled.

Before we progress into a discussion of English for the Children and its movement to abolish Bilingual Education in the U.S., I would like to discuss briefly what Bilingual Education is. Many people are confused about the facts, and I believe this has aided Unz’s anti-bilingual initiatives a great deal. Bilingual Education and SLA researcher, Stephen Krashen, agrees “If all I knew about bilingual education was what I read in the newspapers,... I’d vote against it, too.” (Crawford, 2001, para.15)

III. CURRENT DEFINITIONS OF BILINGUAL EDUCATION:

There are basically three main models of Bilingual Education. The most common Bilingual Ed. classrooms are called “*transitional*”, and instruction in these classes usually starts out 90% in Spanish (or other home language) and 10% in English, moving rapidly toward the use of 50% Spanish, 50% English in classes. Little or no translation from language to language is permitted, because the goal is to teach students to comprehend and respond in both languages, rather than translate. The general idea is to ensure that ELLs will continue learning grade level academic material while learning English (as opposed to falling behind academically). Learners are from a similar cultural and linguistic background, so that they can easily work cooperatively. The main idea is to assimilate these students into English only classrooms and culture as soon as possible. Students often lose most of their home language skills.

The second most common model is called the Early-exit Two

Way or Dual Immersion Model. This model is based on research that has proven it takes on average as much as 5-7 years to arrive at a complex academic language proficiency (CALP) in the second language (Cummins, 1996). Classes are generally comprised equally of native Spanish speakers and native speakers of English. This model has proven extremely effective, provided that students receive quality cooperative, hands-on instruction, are taught through the medium of both languages without translation, and are provided large amounts of reading material in both languages. This method ensures that students understand most of the academic material being taught throughout K-6th grade, after which students are transitioned. Students generally do not continue to develop their abilities in their home language and often lose much of them.

A third model of Bilingual Education is called the Late-exit or Maintenance Dual Immersion model. This is the biliteracy model which holds much promise for American society. However, this promise remains *significantly at risk*, due to the Unz/Tuchman initiatives. Bilingual, biliterate students provided long-term enrichment instruction via both languages without translation are known to surpass the fluency and the cognitive reasoning of monolingual ELLs, and even that of monolingual native speakers of English.

In contrast, Thomas and Collier (1997) tell us

students being schooled in all English initially make dramatic gains in the early grades, whatever the type of program...and *this misleads teachers and administrators into assuming that the students are going to continue to do extremely well* (in later grades) {italics added}...they do not detect the fact that these students typically fall behind the typical achievement levels of native English speakers...each year, resulting in a very significant cumulative achievement gap of 15-26 NCEs by the end of their school years...bilingual students...sustain the gains in L2 (English) and in some cases... achieve even higher scores

than typical native English speaker performance as they move through their secondary years of school (Thomas and Collier, 1997, in Garcia, 2000, p. 11-12).

The end result of Maintenance bilingual education, then, is the graduation of competent, confident bilinguals who are cognitively and culturally more adaptable than their monolingual peers. This model gives equal status to the two cultures and the two languages and thus attempts to combat stereotypes and language loss that can negatively affect learners. It is populated by both native speakers of English and native speakers of Spanish (or other home language the school works with). Thus, the Maintenance Dual Immersion Bilingual Education model affords *all* classroom participants extended, quality exposure to native fluency, bilingualism, biliteracy and biculturalism. Krashen (1999) explains

...there is strong evidence that literacy transfers...the building literacy in the primary language is a short-cut to English literacy...this claim comes from studies showing that the reading process is similar in different languages, and that correlation between literacy development in the first language and second language is high...even when the orthographies...are very different. (para. 2-4).

Researchers nearly unanimously agree quality Maintenance Dual Immersion Bilingual Education works, even for standardized exams! (see, for example, Thomas and Collier, 1997; Garcia, 2000) I believe this to be caused by the multiple intelligences techniques used in maintenance bilingual ed. and the fact that students are receiving dual input to their linguistic intelligence which is so highly tested on standardized exams. This may well be the “edge” that Americans are looking for when competing educationally and in the world marketplace.

In our rush for a cheap, quick fix for changing school demographics, we may have overlooked and rejected the very innovative practices that have been proven to result in the very success we so

desperately seek!

IV. THE UNZ INITIATIVES

If we are to truly understand why Mr. Unz and others are fighting tirelessly to abolish bilingual education in the U.S. we must allow them a voice. In Unz's (1999) article "California and the End of White America", he describes Californians of white, European decent as having become unnerved by "recognizing that they were fast becoming a minority within their own state" (para. 6). His claimed motive for creating English For The Children is to prevent a fear-based ground swell of "White Nationalism" against immigrants, and primarily against Hispanics. Unz feels strongly the necessity of being part of creating what he calls "The New American Melting Pot", and to do otherwise would be courting disaster for our nation. Unz and his supporters claim that bilingual education has been proven a colossal failure and that its practices bar immigrants (most notably Hispanics), from becoming assimilated Americans. They blame the high dropout rate of Hispanics and low English fluency levels in California on the failure of bilingual education. And, in some cases where California schools were historically under funded, under equipped and understaffed, or taught only in Spanish, Mr. Unz has a point. Schools of that sort *do* need reform! However, stereotyping all bilingual ed. programs as being unequivocally the same, is a very large error indeed.

Herrera & Murry (1999) tell us that Unz has also claimed that English is an endangered language "necessitating public initiatives which provide for its legal protection." (p. 180). If that is so, I wonder why English has been documented as the second most commonly spoken language in the world as of 1999 (Doyle, Fryer & Cere, 2002).

Crawford (1992) tells us that some prominent Hispanics in power say that to them, "the 'legal protection of English' sounds a lot like 'equal rights for whites': a demand inspired by the paranoia of the dominant group. In a word, racism" (para. 1).

If science is to be considered more reliable than Unz's arbitrary

selection of a one year timeframe, then students must be allowed sufficient time to learn the academic English they need to reach sufficient fluency to compete academically and in the marketplace. Barring that, we will very likely foreclose them a future other than one of poverty, seeing that they will be less well educated. It makes one wonder if the motivation behind this unrealistic expectation of one year is primarily so that the American public won't have to spend any more time, energy or money on their ELL students. According to Martin (2000)

Genario Bastos, president of Bastos Book Company and former professor of language education at William Paterson University and New Jersey City University, lays the blame for the bilingual backlash at the feet of politicians, judges and mainstream school administrators who basically set these programs up for failure... The courts and school administrations did not rely on existing expert advice, opinion and research. Many programs were designed more for economic and political expediency, that is, to keep the voters quiet and happy...bilingual administrators were never given power by monolingual (English) administrators to implement "true" bilingual education programs (p. 37).

Martin (2000) also adds that students are usually transitioned after they have tested at the 40% of native proficiency, and states "If there was ever a formula for failure, this is it" (p. 37). Apparently, Unz et al. are committed to destroying poorly administered, marginalized programs, without a willingness to stop and see that there are plenty of successful programs which offer far more advantages than monolingual immersion classrooms. Successful programs, such as those in Boston, San José, New York City, and San Diego could be used as models countrywide.

Also, in an article by Breslau and Peraino (2001) that appeared in *Newsweek*, Mr. Unz was also quoted as having claimed that comments supporting the success of Bilingual Education made by New York City School's Chancellor, Harold Levy, were "meaningless",

and that he will continue with his work to end bilingual education in NYC permanently (p. 64). (One cannot help but note the similarity to Commissioner Atkins' marginalizing comments cited earlier.) Apparently, Mr. Unz simply did not want to hear the findings of the New York City Board of Education in regard to their bilingual education students. Krashen (2001) tells us these findings state that those who entered with greater competence in their first language exited more quickly than those with less, providing strong support for the positive impact of first language development.

V. CONSEQUENCES AND THE CURRENT STATE OF AFFAIRS:

Equally dismaying are some of the actual occurrences in some California schools since the passing of Proposition 227. Unz had repeatedly reported that his program would allow parents to request bilingual education waivers. Yet, in many schools (such as Lompoc) groups of parents found that their requests were unilaterally denied without appeal. (Cline and Necochea, 2001)

Mr. Unz has also been known to publish demeaning and demonizing comments about bilingual education teachers and researchers, calling them "human vampires", insinuating they support a system from which only they can benefit. After debating about best practices for ELLs with bilingual education researchers, Unz also published a statement that "the IQs of most professors of education are not statistically significant" (Unz, 2000, 2001 in Crawford, 2001, para. 7-8). To me, these prideful comments and others, such as the equally distasteful one proclaiming that he is the bilingual educator's "personal bin Laden" (Unz, 2001), make one step back for a moment. I wonder if this is really the man we would want to create policies that will control the education of thousands of future adult Americans?

In her 1998 article entitled "The Case Against Bilingual Education" Ms. Pedalino Porter (an ardent Unz supporter) states that the age-old refrain "My grandfather came from Greece (or Sicily or Poland) and they didn't do anything special for him, and he did okay" is

no longer part of our public discourse. (p. 30). I find that quite ironic, seeing as Mr. Unz (1999) uses this exact same ‘melting pot’ argument, when referring to his mother’s and his own successes (para. 54). When I hear Americans say “my grandfather did it, what’s wrong with them?” as a marginalization argument, I am quick to remind them that students during the early 1900’s were not required to pass Regents Exams in all subject areas, become computer specialists, nor even speak fluent English in order to eventually make a living wage. Perhaps we middle-class Americans need to stop and think about what level of literacy and career-related skills we would like to develop in those who are still learning English, especially because these same students are fast becoming a significant percentage of the American population!

I often tell school professionals, if you work with ELLs you also will likely be marginalized.

A clear-cut example of such marginalization of ELLs and related school staff came from our local area last year, when a large Central New York school district was facing extreme budget cuts. It was brought to my attention that one of the first recommendations proposed to quickly resolve the fiscal crisis was that all services to ELLs should be abandoned and their teachers laid off. Somehow, it came as quite a surprise to some that such a denial of those students’ civil rights would not only be unconstitutional, but *illegal*.

Returning to Ms. Porter’s 1998 article, she goes on to insinuate that bilingual educators, researchers and theorists have intentionally lengthened the transition period (to mainstream classes) and have caused many ELLs to languish for up to six years in bilingual classrooms. She claims that many students received insufficient instruction in English to be mainstreamed (p. 38). Researcher Richard Tucker (1999) tells us otherwise

The best predictor of cognitive/academic language development in a second language is the level of development of cognitive/academic language proficiency in the first lan-

guage. . . . If the goal is to help the student ultimately develop the highest possible degree of content mastery and second language proficiency, time spent instructing the child in a familiar language is a wise investment. (p. 3)

The intent is not to segregate students, but to provide them with understandable instruction in all subjects so they can actually think about, learn, and discuss content materials all the while learning more and more academic English. After all, as I understand it, this is critical pedagogy.

Students must be allowed sufficient time (i.e. 5 to 7 yrs.) to learn the academic English they need to reach sufficient fluency to compete academically and in the marketplace. Barring that, we will very likely foreclose them a future other than one of poverty, seeing that they will be less well educated. As much as we may want to push for a shorter timeframe and less money, it just isn't going to happen. And it isn't happening in California *right now*, no matter what Unz and the media want you to believe!

According to Crawford's (2002) follow-on statistical analysis "Proposition 227 had a 92% 'failure rate' last year, by Unz's own standard. In 2001-2002, it failed at least 1,393,849 children who remained limited in English...In other words, after four years of Proposition 227, two-thirds of the children this law was designed to help {still} remain limited in English!" (para. 1 & 6).

Freeman and Freeman (1999) tell us:

Collier (1995) and Ramirez (1991) have shown that if we follow bilingual students over time, students in programs with long-term primary language support *score higher on standardized tests given in English*. Yet these and other research studies favoring long-term bilingual education are often discredited, ignored, or misrepresented in a process Cummins (1996) has called a deliberate distribution of 'disinformation' (p. 246).

Prominent researchers and educators who have experience in the trenches and know that “business by the book” does not apply to educating non-native speakers have even labeled Proposition 227 as “the most ‘extreme, irresponsible, and hazardous’ in California’s history” (NABE News, 1998, in Herrera and Murry, 1999).

Olsen (1998) tells us how many California educators feel about the fall out of the Unz/Tuchman initiatives:

Using words that sound inclusive, this initiative crafts policy that divides. In language that promises access and inclusion, it proposes an inflexible policy that ties the hands of educators impedes access to an education, and curtails English language development for immigrant students. It prevents individuals and our society from reaping the benefits of a well-educated bilingual citizenry, and turns the tide dangerously away from the promise of an open, democratic, just and diverse society. (p.13)

Freeman and Freeman (1999) give us a concrete example of what happens in monolingual programs “some students may learn to pronounce words to sound like English, but they may not attach meaning to the English sound sequences” (p. 244). I can say from first hand experience that this phenomenon absolutely does occur, as I have known students who appeared to read fluently as a result of such drills. Their high level of music intelligence allowed them to decipher phonemic patterns. Yet, when asked about the content of the reading, they would sometimes give fanciful and totally unrelated answers, such as “spinach”, because their comprehension level was still so low. Such students get placed in Special Education. Simply put, Unz-style pedagogy is being touted as the latest solution to a problem, while it is actually the very type of education (pushing assimilation over all else) that is to blame for student drop-out rates and school failure. If high test scores and lower costs are the objectives of Unz et al., I wonder why they do not realize that their program will produce exactly that sort of uncreative teaching and inadequate learning for

students in Proposition 227-mandated classrooms. Worse yet, Proposition 227 requires teachers who have little or no specialized training in SLA to use inappropriate methodologies for beginning level ELLs in a program that is too brief to accomplish the proposition's goals of significant English language acquisition and academic achievement (Kerper-Mora, 2000). Crawford (1998) explained why before results were even in

placing children in incomprehensible classrooms and drilling them in meaningless exercises is likely to slow them down...Still, hopes for a shortcut to English die hard...shown by Californians' vote to mandate a one-year 'English immersion' approach that has no support in educational research (para. 16 & 17).

Do you need more convincing? The numbers are in on California, folks. Special Education referrals are up 340% since bilingual education was abolished in that state (Ortiz, 2003), because there are simply *no* shortcuts to getting the job done!

Surely, it is time for the message to get out. In our fear, impatience and hesitancy to adjust emotionally to demographic shifts, we are allowing an uninformed, self-absorbed, wealthy businessman with a colonialist ideology to scapegoat bilingual education. A man who has no experience with children, educational best practices, nor SLA research.

CONCLUSIONS AND REFLECTIONS:

What we are asking of ELLs is no small task. We are asking them to perform linguistically and academically at the very same level as their English speaking classmates who started school with at least a 5 to 6 yr. head start. Maintenance Dual Immersion Bilingual Education offers all of the necessary components for long-term success and more. In contrast, English for the Children only offers American society a jury-rigged future, one which deprives immigrant children of the tools

they need to succeed in that society and in the global marketplace.

In my opinion, this is where Americans need to be thinking of bilingual education as a long-term investment in America's future. The real benefits will only come if you do your background research, you buy into what is working and you remain steadfast over the long haul. That, along with all the rest of its tremendous educational advantages, is what makes Maintenance Dual Immersion Bilingual Education a "must have" program. If we truly want ELLs to assimilate in a productive and economically advantageous manner, research says our best investment is Maintenance Dual Immersion Bilingual Education.

There is little doubt about the importance of winning the battle...Language-minority students are predicted to account for about 40% of the school-age population by the 2030s, according to researchers David Berliner and Bruce Biddle..."Gonzalez notes...We have to recognize that our kids are growing up and living in a world that is very different from ours. We are disadvantaging them if we do not help them grow up biliterate" (Miner, 1999, para. 59 & 61).

When one's motivations are based on fear of what might happen, it is easy to jump to conclusions and harder to see the broader reality. I think that much of the American populace has jumped too soon and let a dubious "expert" lead us to a worse end than that from which we started. As a matter of fact, most students in California who Unz et al. label as the products of a failed bilingual pedagogy were never in bilingual education (Crawford, 1999; Krashen, 1999).

Even worse, Leistyna (2002) explains what happens when ELLs are undereducated. The result is that the ELL experiences rejection on all sides!

a de-skilling process creates what I refer to as bridge people; people that are miseducated in a way that connects them to two worlds but works vigilantly to make certain

they belong to neither (p.346).

There is so much more that needs to be said about the plight of Hispanics and all ELLs in America and how the effects of poverty impact their success or lack thereof in our school systems. Suffice to say that there are extremely successful bilingual education programs in several American cities, such as Boston, San Diego, San José, and New York City that could be used as models to establish a norm for schools in other areas.

One haunting question remains and must be faced when all is said and done. Will Americans finally decide to throw off an outdated, colonialist ideology of racism and open their hearts, their wallets, their schools and their lives to the beauty of other cultures and languages? It's time to face facts, America. Projections are that Hispanics alone will constitute 24% or more of the American population by the year 2050 (Doyle, Fryer, & Cere, 2002, p. 18). Let's just step back a minute and make sure we know where we're going, what works, and what's fair before we jump on anymore shortsighted populist bandwagons.

Essentially, we are at a crossroads with what to do with "the rest of America's community". Thus, I refer yet again to Theobald's (1997) call to honesty. *Will we finally decide we really do believe in "liberty and justice for all"?* Or will we decide once again to do things the way they've historically been done, to push aside the educational needs and civil rights of millions of immigrants, thereby dooming them to a life of impoverishment, disenfranchisement and despair?

There simply are no economic problems that can rationalize away the educational, emotional and societal damage currently being done to English Language Learners in America. However, one thing is clear. Whether or not we find it in our hearts to do *whatever* it takes to make Hispanics or any other ELLs successful, educated American citizens will directly affect their futures, and the futures of us *all*.

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