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ABSTRACT

State after state is wrestling with federal legislation's mandate to respond to the needs of students whose native language is not English. Much ambiguity, confusion, and frustration surrounds the issue of bilingual-bicultural education. This paper begins by describing the confusion which often surrounds the English component in a bilingual program, and then reviews the historical development of bilingual education in the United States. Within this context, aspects and implications of the Bilingual Education Act are discussed. Definitions of key terms are then presented, followed by a discussion of the fundamental question of whether the child's mother tongue should function solely as a "bridge" to English or whether a systematic attempt should be made to maintain and develop linguistic and cultural differences between the child's native language and the target language. Specific problems related to bilingual-bicultural education are then discussed in some detail. Some of these include the qualifications of bilingual-bicultural teachers, the development and implementation of a bilingual curriculum, the development of bilingual-bicultural materials, the identification of bilingual children and/or the assessment of language dominance. Finally, the importance of community involvement in bilingual-bicultural programs is discussed. (Author/TL)

BILINGUAL/BICULTURAL EDUCATION: WHY? FOR WHOM? WHAT? HOW?

by Kathleen Jacobson, University of Minnesota

(NOTE: Numbers in parentheses refer to items in the Bibliography at the end of this article.)

State after state is wrestling with Federal legislation's mandate to respond to the needs of students whose native language is not English. In Minnesota, a group gathered several times at the Capitol this year to draft a bilingual/bicultural education bill. A preliminary draft is now ready for discussion, and will be introduced by Senator Allan Spear in the next legislative session; it follows several previous drafts, all of which were vigorously debated and discussed.

Why is there so much ambiguity and frustration surrounding this issue? Because definitions, curricular models, research techniques, and problems inherent in program implementation must all be considered during the initial stages of planning.

To those directly involved in the field, "bilingual/bicultural education has become one of the most significant movements in American education since the Renaissance." (10, p.1) To others, the thought of bilingualism in the U.S. is incompatible with the dream of living in a linguistic and ethnic melting pot. The melting-pot concept, however, is being re-interpreted in contradictory ways. Robinett (13) sees the American melting pot as closely resembling a seething cauldron, while Hockett (9) suggests that as of late there has been "a reduction of heat under America's melting pot."

Saville-Troike (12) estimates that about one-fourth of all people in the U.S. can communicate in more than one language and that one person in every ten speaks a language other than English. Gaarder (12) further estimates that these 20 million people represent 34 or more languages. Goaded by Federal legislation, Supreme Court decisions, and community outcries, bilingualism and bilingual education have mushroomed into topics of immediate concern for a variety of persons including the non-English speaker, the native English speaker, the linguist, the sociologist, the educator, and the politician. Each holds assumptions, preconceptions, and definitions which help confuse the issue in planning for programs.

The Role of English

Confusion stemming from the role of English in bilingual education exists even among individuals working within the domains of TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages.) According to Robinett, the major concern of TESOL "is one but varied; we are concerned with

people encountering problems because of English." (13, p.197) The author classifies five types of persons who speak languages other than English or a dialect other than standard English -- the bilingual is just one of the five. The categories include (a) the student who is learning English as a foreign language (EFL), illustrated by the case of the German who is studying English within the cultural context of his native language. (b) Then there is a student learning English as a second language (ESL) motivated by a specific purpose, i.e. the foreign student learning English while in the U.S. (c) A person learning English as a second language (ESL) may be motivated by the goal of eventually assimilating into the mainstream of American culture--for example, the long-term resident living in the U.S. (d) The bilingual must be able to function successfully within two linguistic communities and might be exemplified by the Mexican-American living in the Southwest. (e) There is the individual who already speaks English natively but who speaks a dialect other than standard English. The teacher in this situation is involved in teaching English as a second dialect (ESOD). While these categories can be addressed individually, they overlap. The English language is the basic instructional component for each type of individual.

What is happening to the English component in a few bilingual/bicultural programs points to an inherent lack of understanding of the role of English in the bilingual curriculum. For example, Senator Alan Cranston, in a recent article concerning such legislation in the state of California (4), has stated that programs such as ESL are nothing more than "crash courses in English." (p. 59) Shanker (15) reports that "many New York City schools must entirely dismantle some of their ESL programs so as to maintain bilingual/bicultural programs, and non-hispanic teachers (who speak both English and Spanish) have been replaced by monolinguals who speak very little English . . this results in many children learning no English whatsoever." Saville-Troike (14), TESOL President, states: "The role of ESL in bilingual education indeed seems to be badly misunderstood by some educators and misrepresented by others who create a conflict in spirit where there is need for cooperation and mutual support." (p.2)

A Brief Survey

Before examining varied definitions of bilingualism and describing existing models, it may be well to review bilingualism in the U.S. For the present, the term "bilingual education" is used to refer to instruction in two languages, one of which is English.

U.S. experience with bilingualism falls into two distinct periods, the first from 1840-1920 and the second from 1963-1974. Cincinnati, Ohio, opened the first bilingual school in 1840. Major factors contributing to the eventual demise of such schools revolved around lack of funds, lack of community commitment to the need for developing cultural and linguistic pluralism, and political isolationism. Bilingual education lay virtually dormant from 1920 until 1963. Evidence has shown that a variety of punitive measures was used against children speaking their

mother tongue while in school during the interim. Interest in language acquisition and in foreign languages in general regained momentum in the 50's and 60's. Within a social context, several factors might have been instrumental in renewing interest, including Sputnik and the widespread dissatisfaction of America's ethnic and linguistic minorities.

In 1963, a Spanish-English bilingual program was initiated in grades one to three at the Coral Way Elementary School in Dade County, Florida. During half the day, Spanish-speaking children were instructed by native speakers of Spanish, while the English-speaking children were taught in English. During the second half of the day, instruction was given in the second language. As children increased their linguistic proficiency, concepts were introduced in the native language of the teacher. From the program's inception, children were allowed to use either language while eating lunch or playing. This program was considered successful and gained overwhelming community approval from both Spanish- and English-speaking parents. Shortly thereafter, several states initiated similar programs financed by local support. While efforts to evaluate the programs were spotty, they nevertheless set the scene for passage of the Bilingual Education Act in 1968 (1).

The Bilingual Education Act

On January 2, 1967, President Johnson signed into law a Bilingual Education Act introduced by Senator Ralph Yarborough. This marked the Federal Government's first official recognition of the need to "redress the traditional miseducation of children whose home language is other than English." (1, p.429)

> "In recognition of the special educational needs of the large segment of children of limited-English speaking ability in the U.S. Congress hereby declares it to be the policy of the United States to provide financial assistance to local educational agencies to develop and carry out new and imaginative elementary and secondary programs designed to meet these special educational needs. For the purposes of this title, 'children of limited-English speaking ability' means children who come from environments where the dominant language is other than English." (Quoted in 1, p. 432)

One limitation of the Bilingual Education Act is the apparent lack of long-range goals. Inclusion of a poverty clause along with a description of the nature of need among non-English speaking children indirectly creates a correlation between poverty and linguistic diversity. Grants are generally restricted to school districts with a high concentration of children from families with incomes under $3000 or receiving payment under AFDC programs.

Inclusion of such a restriction illustrates lack of understanding of bilingualism in that linguistic and cultural diversity transcend

economic levels and need not carry out a "remedial" or "compensatory" function.

While passage of the Bilingual Education Act raised public awareness concerning bilingualism in the U.S., it in no way offered a panacea, as several important issues remain unsolved: (a) There is no consensus as to where the country is moving philosophically when dealing with bilingualism -- whether toward linguistic and cultural ethnocentricism (the "melting pot") or toward cultural pluralism. (b) What, if any, is the relationship of bilingualism to poverty? Other problems emerge in attempting to draft state legislation; they will be addressed later.

Definitions

Regardless of the fact that many attempts have been made to define it, bilingualism continues to be a confusing term. On the one hand, it has been defined as the ability to produce completely meaningful utterances in another language, native-like control of two languages, or the passive knowledge of the written language. On the other hand, Jakobovits (7) considers bilingualism a relative rather than an absolute concept and sees no advantage in attempting to determine when a person is bilingual or to set arbitrary limits to a definition. Bilingualism is never defined in the Bilingual Education Act; however, a definition of a bilingual program is presented in the accompanying guidelines. It is "the use of two languages, one of which is English, as mediums of instruction for the same pupil population in a well-organized program which encompasses part or all of the curriculum and includes the study of the history and culture associated with the mother tongue." (quoted in 1, p.432) With increased interest in bilingual education, a wide variety of programs much different in content objectives is often lumped together today under the general rubric "bilingual education."

Fishman and Lovas (1) present four different goals for bilingual programs. These terms are often used in the literature about the subject, without definition.

Type I: Transitional Bilingualism, which considers that the chief objective of training is to bring about complete facility in English, with only minor consideration of development and support of the mother tongue.

Type II: Monoliterate Bilingualism, which has as its ultimate goal the development of oral-aural skills in both languages; reading and writing in the mother tongue, however, are not considered.

Type III: Partial Bilingualism, which seeks literacy and fluency in both languages but in which mother-tongue reading and writing are restricted to specific subjects.

Type IV: Full bilingualism, which aims at the development of all skills in all subjects using both languages.

A Fundamental Question

For purposes of instruction , should the child's mother tongue function as a "bridge" to English, intended to be crossed as soon as possible and then virtually eliminated in favor of English? Or should a systematic attempt be made to maintain and develop linguistic and cultural differences between the child's native language and English? When defining bilingualism and designing programs of bilingual/bicultural education this is one question which must immediately be addressed. Fishman (1) cautions that we cannot begin to understand bilingualism in the U.S. until we recognize the diversity of bilingual settings within the country. California, Massachusetts, and New Mexico have passed bilingual/bicultural legislation. Is it feasible for Minnesota planners to incorporate already-existing definitions and models of bilingualism and to thus simply transfer large segments of existing legislation to Minnesota statutes, while still accurately reflecting the needs of bilingual speakers in Minnesota? Fishman concludes that "there are many kinds of bilingualism and that it would be unwise to either make or to seek a pat statement which applies equally to all." (1, p.436)

The Lau Nichols decision in California mandates some kind of affirmative action or program which will provide equal opportunity in education for the non-English speaking child, and individual states are responding to this mandate. There are often, however, formidable obstacles in designing and implementing a program.

Problem Areas:

A. The bilingual teacher.

Because of current demand, teacher-training institutions are under increased pressure to develop programs designed to train a cadre of bilingual/bicultural teachers. Many states are in fact moving swiftly toward the certification of such teachers. In August, 1974, fourteen leaders in the field met in Washington to identify criteria for the design and content of academic programs to train such teachers. It was determined that they should be able to demonstrate competencies in seven areas: (1) language proficiency, (2) linguistics, (3) culture, (4) instructional methods, (5) curriculum utilization and adaption, (6) assessment, and (7) school-community relations. (10) It is urgent that teachers in bilingual/bicultural education programs be qualified in subject areas as well as in language skills. In some legislation a bilingual teacher is a teacher fluent in both English and the primary language of the limited-English speaking pupils enrolled in the programs. But such a teacher need not be certified to teach in both languages, and may be

exempted from other certification requirements, such as subject-matter training, even for secondary-school teaching, or general elementary education training for elementary schools. As a guideline for assuring competence, such statements overlook five of the seven criteria identified and emphasize linguistic proficiency as the sole requisite for teaching. California legislation includes such limited criteria.

B. The curriculum.

It is crucial that in designing the curriculum the bilingual/bicultural program not become synonymous with remedial education. Specific curricular decisions must be made concerning allocation of time and instructional content to be offered in the second language. It is often difficult for program planners to specify the amount of the school day in which instruction will be given in the child's mother tongue. The times may vary from twenty minutes daily to half of the day in English and the other half in the second language. Program designers are further challenged by decisions regarding the subject matter to be taught in the second language. Response to these issues depends on how the term "bilingual program" has been defined as well as its long-range goals.

C. Materials.

There is still a lack of materials suitable for bilingual/bicultural programs in almost every language, although some progress is apparent. Basically three kinds of bilingual materials exist: (1) those imported from the country where the language is spoken; (2) those published in the U.S.; and (3) those designed to meet the needs of a specific program. There is a continuing need for development of good bilingual materials, however.

D. Community cooperation.

Community cooperation is essential to the success of a bilingual program. Open lines of communication with the community must be established and maintained at all stages of planning and implementation. All sectors of the community, including parents, school administrators, the students, and teachers, must be convinced of and committed to the idea that there is value in maintaining cultural and linguistic diversity.

E. Identifying bilingual children.

A final problem is really double-edged. Who is to be considered bilingual? To what extent is a child bilingual? Where will such a program be established? Reliable and valid instruments for determining language dominance must be utilized when evaluating the students' linguistic, conceptual, and attitudinal status. Finally, the specific locale in which a bilingual program will be established must be determined, based upon a conscious rationale. The Massachusetts law makes it

mandatory for every school system with twenty or more children of limited English-speaking ability to provide bilingual education for its pupils. At this point, one should reiterate the necessity to consider the linguistic composition of the school district. How would a school board deal with a district having a linguistically heterogeneous population with speakers of Ojibway, Greek, Norwegian, Polish, and Spanish? In Minnesota such a situation could conceivably develop.

The Next Step

It would indeed be incorrect to underrate the impact which bilingual/bicultural education has already had on American educational philosophy as state after state attempts legislatively to accomodate it. Many challenges emerge, ranging from definition of the concept to determining means for identifying the bilingual child.

In addition to coping with funding problems, teacher certification, and lack of materials, it seems that Americans must struggle with the major question of goals. Do they wish linguistic and ethnic parochialism or cultural and linguistic pluralism? Fishman states that "bilingual education in the U.S. will succeed only if it achieves quality, quality such as has never been allowed. If we fail to achieve this level of workmanship, we may expect this exhilerating new trend in our schools to languish and die as have so many other hopeful educational ideas in the past." (1, p.436) On a more optimistic note, however, he adds that we are "living in an age of miracles."

Perhaps a sign which augurs progress in dealing with the problems in the U.S. is found in the increased interest of well-qualified professionals (including foreign language teachers and teachers of English as a Second Language) in the pedagogical problems involved in designing, implementing, and assessing programs of bilingual/bicultural education today.

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MCTFL CONSTITUTION TO BE REVISED

A committee of the MCTFL Executive Board is in the process of revising the Constitution of MCTFL. The revised version will be presented to full membership for approval at next October's annual meeting. Members of the committee are Dale Lange, University of Minnesota, Chairman; Melanie Weiss, Robbinsdale Schools; Germaine Arendt, Minneapolis Schools; Howard Hathaway, St. Paul Schools; Gerald Eibner, Burnsville Schools; and Helen Jorstad, Ex Officio. The present Constitution follows. Any member of the revision committee would appreciate hearing your feelings about revision.

Please send comments c/o Dale Lange, 224 Peik Hall, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis 55455.