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ABSTRACT

Tucson, Arizona's Sunnyside School District pilot bilingual education program is described. The program was begun in 1985 to help prevent academic failure in limited English-proficient, high academic risk students. The pilot program offered sheltered immersion instruction in biology and United States history for language minority students with a history of academic problems. The students in these courses were not required to compete with academically successful peers, but both content area and language needs were addressed. Despite long classes beginning early in the morning, attendance was excellent. The four teachers involved were given pre- and in-service instruction and a follow-up workshop, focusing on specific techniques to make content-area instruction comprehensible and maximize student success. Program students showed high academic achievement in grades and on pre- and post-test comparisons. The greatest gain was in reading comprehension. Student journal entries indicated a generally positive attitude toward the courses and improved self-confidence. (MSE)

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SUCCESS FOR LEP STUDENTS:
THE SUNNYSIDE SHELTERED IMMERSION PROGRAM

David Freeman and Others

Presented at the 16th Annual Meeting of the National Council of
Teachers of English (November 21-26, 1986, San Antonio, TX)

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Success for LEP Students:

The Sunnyside Sheltered Immersion Program

Many different types of bilingual programs have been developed to meet the needs of Limited English Proficient (LEP) students. Underlying these programs is the belief that cognitive development is facilitated by instruction in the student's first language (L1), that students develop more positive attitudes toward school as the result of the use of the L1, and that instruction in the L1 actually increases acquisition of the L2 (Cummins 1981). Most frequently, bilingual programs have been implemented at the elementary school level and have been designed for students whose L1 is not the socially prestigious language of the community.

Immersion programs, such as those developed in Canada, on the other hand, employ a second language to teach content area materials to students whose first language is the dominant societal language (Genesee 1984). These programs are implemented primarily at the elementary level, but have also been used with secondary students. Hernandez-Chavez (1984) has argued that such programs are not appropriate for language minority students in the United States because of a number of reasons. Primary among these is that immersion in English would cause a loss of the native language. According to Hernandez-Chavez, bilingual programs are superior to immersion programs for these language minority students.

However, a number of language minority students in the United States reach high school without the benefit of bilingual education and are enrolled in districts which offer no bilingual programs at the secondary level. Often, these students are not placed in ESL programs since they demonstrate oral proficiency in English. Nevertheless, many of these students have not developed the literacy skills necessary for academic success in either L1 or L2. These are high-risk students who often drop out of school when they reach the legal age to do so (Fillmore 1986, Duran 1983).

In the summer of 1985 the Sunnyside School District in Tucson, Arizona, instituted a pilot program designed to meet the needs of these high-risk students. The district offered two sheltered immersion classes, one in biology and one in U.S. history, for language minority students who had a record of academic failure. In the following sections we place the Sunnyside program in a historical perspective and then describe the pilot program, including the criteria for student selection to the classes, the instructional methods used, and the results of the program. We conclude that for these language minority students the kind of sheltered immersion program offered by the Sunnyside School District provides the opportunity for both academic success and an improved attitude toward school.

Historical Perspective

Since the founding of this country, education has been considered the way to achieve success. Thomas Jefferson believed that education would allow all citizens the chance to succeed regardless of "wealth, birth, or other accidental condition of circumstance" (Broudy 1971:127). Two hundred years later the National Commission on Excellence in Education reinforced that ideal in A Nation at Risk (Gardner et al. 1983:4), which states that "All, regardless of race or class or economic status, are entitled to a fair chance and to the tools for developing their individual powers of mind and spirit to the utmost."

The Commission's report claims that a large portion of students in the United States are not succeeding and that many of the unsuccessful are minorities. Academic failure is blamed on deficiencies in education including such things as the amount of homework assigned students, the lack of science, math, and language classes in the curriculum, the overabundance of electives in course offerings, minimum competency tests that are not demanding enough, and unchallenging, poorly-written textbooks. All of these deficiencies emphasize what is missing in school programs without really looking at the learners.

In another national report put out by the Commission on Reading, Becoming A Nation of Readers (Anderson et

al.1984:1) reading is considered to be "a cornerstone for a child's success in school." Yet, 40% of this country's minority young people are considered "functional illiterates" (Gardner et al.: 8). Bilingual students who are labeled "Limited English Proficient" (LEP) are often included in the group of minority functional illiterates (Thonis 1981). Not only are the LEP students considered functional illiterates but they are also viewed as having "...poorly developed language and literacy skills in two languages" (161). The belief that many LEP students have no language or are semilingual is one that is held by many even within the field of bilingual education (Pelosi 1981, Carter and Segura 1979, Ortiz and Chavez 1981, Hernandez-Chavez 1985).

If there are approximately 1.35 million LEP students in grades K-12 (Forum 1985), these LEP students not only lack the "cornerstone" that reading provides but also lack language ability and are probably not being given either "a fair chance" to succeed or the "tools for developing their individual powers." According to these reports, then, not only the schools but also the students have deficiencies.

In order to correct the literacy problems and the assumed language deficit of LEP students, schools have developed alternative English programs dealing with literacy skills. These special programs are characterized by a slowed pace of instruction, the use of simplified texts, and the

division of language into isolated linguistic units (Pelosi 1981, Forum 1985). As a result of this type of remedial instruction, bilingual students are reported to fall farther and farther behind their monolingual peers. By the time these students study in the upper grades, the academic work that requires control of reading and writing seems far out of reach.

Rather than looking at the deficiencies in schools and students, there is a more positive approach that can be taken to education. Learners can be viewed as having potential that can be increased by drawing upon their background knowledge. Teachers can expand communication potential thorough all the media including art, math, music, and language (Harste and Mikulecky 1984). Language itself can be expanded through reading, writing, speaking, and listening because all four feed into a common pool that Burke (1984) calls "The Linguistic Data Pool." As students listen, talk, read, and write, together and with their teachers, different types of linguistic data help expand language potential. Teachers can help students find purposes for their learning so that classroom success is possible. (Goodman 1986). The result of this approach for language minority students is empowerment (Cummins 1986). It is this positive approach that was the basis of the Sunnyside program.

The Sunnyside Program and other Immersion Programs

The Sunnyside sheltered immersion classes had some of the characteristics of sheltered and immersion classes as described by others but also differed from such classes in certain ways. In immersion classes of the French-Canadian type, students are selected on the basis of language proficiency. The classes are considered sheltered because beginning learners of French are not competing with native speakers of French (Lambert 1984). In the Sunnyside program language proficiency was only one of the criteria used to determine student eligibility. All the students were labeled LEP, but, in addition, all had failed a number of classes and all had scored low on standardized tests administered by the district. The classes were sheltered in the sense that all the students had experienced a lack of academic success. These students were not competing with academically successful students.

Sheltered classes teach language through content. As Krashen (1985:64) states, "A crucial characteristic of the sheltered class is that it is a real subject matter class, not 'ESL math' or selections from subject matter classes introduced as part of the language class. The focus and the test are on the subject matter." This characteristic was shared by the Sunnyside classes. These were academic classes

in biology and U.S. history. The students' focus was on the subject matter, not on language.

In some sheltered classes the subject matter is simplified so that beginning students can participate and follow instructions (Krashen 1984, Chamot 1982). In other sheltered classes, rather than simplifying the input, teachers use concrete objects and context-embedded language to make input comprehensible (Lapkin and Cummins 1984). We chose not to simplify the input for the students but to use various methods to make the regular classroom material comprehensible.

Thus, while the Sunnyside program shared certain features common to other sheltered and immersion programs, it also differed in significant ways. The students were "sheltered" in the sense that they did not have to compete with academically successful peers. The focus of the classes was on the subject matter rather than on language, at least from the point of view of the students. The teachers, on the other hand, had what Goodman (1986) calls a "double agenda" because they were aware of students' linguistic needs. The teachers attempted to make the content comprehensible for these students not by simplifying it, but by using new teaching techniques, adopting new attitudes toward their students, and by maintaining high expectations for student success.

Selecting Students for the Sunnyside Program

Limited English proficient (LEP) students are presently identified by the Sunnyside district by a home language survey, scores on standardized tests, and staff or parent recommendations. Once identified, these students are assessed in their primary language and placed in either a bilingual or an ESL class. This policy has been instituted recently enough, however, so that many students now in high school were not placed in bilingual classes during elementary school. As a result, although the high school students chosen for the pilot sheltered immersion classes had a home language other than English, they had not developed literacy skills in their first language in a bilingual program. At the same time, the students who took part in this pilot program were sufficiently proficient in oral English so that they were not been placed in ESL classes. Instead, they attended the regular high school classes.

In addition to being identified as LEP, the students chosen for the pilot classes also had low scores on standardized tests (below 41 percentile on the CAT) and had failed at least three classes during the previous school year. The students participating in these classes were LEP students who had experienced little academic success but for whom bilingual education was not a realistic alternative.

Program Structure

The students were placed into one of two courses, biology for the tenth-graders or U.S. history for the eleventh-graders. Both courses are required for graduation. The classes were team taught. One teacher in each class was experienced in the content area and taught biology or history during the regular school year. One of these content teachers had worked extensively with bilingual students while the other normally taught enriched classes for native English speakers. The second teacher in each class was an ESL master's student from the local university doing her teaching internship. Neither of the interns had had experience with the content area. The primary responsibility of the interns was to work with the content area teachers to find ways to make the language input comprehensible for the students.

The pilot classes met five days a week for five hours each day, starting at 7 in the morning and ending at noon. There were two three-week sessions corresponding to first and second semester classes. While the early starting time could have discouraged both students and teachers, attendance was excellent. Furthermore, the five-hour block provided the time necessary for in-depth examination of a topic. In biology, for example, students had time to be introduced to a topic, read about it, do a lab activity, and

work up a group oral report all in one day. In history students were able to read an article on a topic, view a related film, discuss the film in groups, and write a summary and reaction paper. Having a variety of activities centered around a single topic seemed to help the students as they completed the equivalent of a week's work each day.

In-Service Teacher Training

The four teachers involved in the program were given both pre- and in-service instruction. In addition, there was a follow-up workshop at the end of the summer program during which the teachers involved during the summer, along with the consultants, presented the successful techniques for teachers who would be involved in sheltered classes during the regular school year.

The pre-service session was a morning-long program. First, the consultants explained the philosophy behind a sheltered immersion class (Krashen 1985). The students would not be competing with native speakers of English, but they would be expected to cover the regular subject area content. They would learn English as they learned through English (Halliday, 1975). It was emphasized that one change from the kind of program Krashen described was that the material would not be simplified.

Next, the image of the learner was discussed. The consultants presented various metaphors for teaching

described by Lindfors (1982). These include the view of the learner as a plant, a builder and an explorer. The plant image suggests a passive learner for whom the teacher must create the proper environment for learning to occur. In contrast, the builder image implies an active learner who hunts for and gathers bits and pieces of knowledge and then assembles them into a fixed structure of knowledge. Harste, Woodward and Burke (1984) have pointed out that the plant image implies that the environment acts on the learner while the builder image suggests that the learner acts on the environment. A more accurate view, they suggest, is embodied in Rosenblatt's (1978) transactional approach which recognizes that the learner and environment act on one another. This approach is captured in Lindfors' explorer image. In explorer classrooms students and teachers work together to discover new ideas. This is the kind of classroom that Cummins (1984) refers to as reciprocal interaction oriented.

Shifting from the theoretical to the practical, the consultants discussed the instructional guidelines for the program. The consultants, working with the bilingual education coordinator, had developed 5 guidelines:

1. Work on developing basic concepts of the content area moving from concrete to abstract. Avoid memorization of facts, dates, etc.

2. Expand concepts through reading and writing to ensure maintenance.

3. Develop the students' ability to read texts in the content area including the ability to summarize, categorize, pick out main facts, make inferences and judgments, compare and contrast, analyze and synthesize, etc.

4. Develop the students' ability to solve problems related to the content area.

5. Develop an improved self-concept and increased self-confidence in the students as the result of competence in the content area.

In the most important phase of the pre-service the teachers were presented with specific techniques designed to make content-area instruction comprehensible for these LEP students. These techniques included using pair and group work using various writing techniques, including journals, using visual aids, and using effective teacher talk (Kagan 1986, Enright and McCloskey 1985, Long and Porter 1985, Johnson 1983, Gonzalez 1980). In addition, the teachers were encouraged to help their students learn how to learn by finding various ways to organize their reading, to locate main ideas and key concepts, and to predict and integrate as they read. During this phase of the pre-service, the consultants had the teachers themselves act as students and

go through a number of the activities that were being recommended.

Finally, the consultants presented a model for a typical day's plan including a preview, a view, and a review. It was explained that the preview should be designed to motivate the students and generate interest in the topic to be covered. At the same time, during the preview, teachers could fill in cultural, linguistic and experiential gaps. Typical preview activities included viewing a film, listening to a recording, or listening to the teacher read.

Following the preview came the view which began with a presentation. The presentation could be a lecture, but it could also be a film or a recording. Teachers were encouraged to keep lectures relatively brief and use this time for students to practice such skills as note-taking.

The bulk of the view part of the lesson was the student activity. Students could read, do lab experiments, work in groups, etc. The emphasis was on active student involvement in cooperative activities that were teacher-structured, but not teacher-centered.

Each lesson was to end with a review or summary activity designed to integrate the concepts presented during the day. While these activities could be quizzes, they could also be skits, debates, group oral or written reports or written summaries.

Each lesson also included 15 minutes of sustained silent reading in the content area. This reading was not to be from the textbook. Instead teachers were encouraged to build classroom libraries of magazines, newspapers, novels, and other materials in their content area from which the students could select.

Because of the intensive nature of the program, homework was limited to journal writing. Students read a newspaper or magazine article or watched a TV show connected in some way with the subject area and then wrote up a summary and reaction. Teachers gave reader-based responses to these journals.

The pre-service was designed to help teachers find ways to make content area subject matter comprehensible input for these LEP students and maximize the potential for student success. During the summer the consultants observed each class at least once a week and then discussed their observations with the teachers. The focus of these in-service sessions was on finding ways to put into practice more fully the ideas that had been presented in the pre-service. It was recognized that for most traditional teachers moving away from a teacher-controlled and teacher-centered classroom toward a teacher-structured, student-centered classroom would be difficult. Nevertheless, for teachers of students who had had limited success in school this change was essential. The observations and

follow-up discussions with the teachers were effective in helping teachers to change. The process of change was facilitated by having a language specialist in the classroom with the content teacher.

Program Evaluation

The program was evaluated in several ways. The primary measure of success was simply the course grades in the content areas for the LEP students. In addition, the students were given pre- and post- tests designed to measure their reading and writing competence in the subject areas. Finally, the students were given an attitude questionnaire at the end of the program, and they wrote their reactions to the classes in their journals.

The student success rate as measured by their grades was very high. Of a total of 46 students, only two failed the classes, both because of excessive absences. This is a low number considering that the classes met five hours each day starting at seven in the morning. One of the goals of the program was to provide students with sufficient success so that they would be motivated to attend classes. It appears that this goal was met. Further, none of the students who attended regularly failed either class. This result indicates that the methods used had made the subject matter comprehensible for these students.

Students were also given pre and post-tests. Students answered true/false tests taken from the texts, completed a reading comprehension test based on a passage from the text, and wrote an essay based on the subject matter. This testing was quite informal, and the results can not be considered highly significant. These results probably reflected the students' general attitude toward testing. For example, in the pre-test for history, students were given 20 minutes to write about an American they thought had played a significant role in the development of the United States. Some students wrote nothing during the time period. The average number of words written was only 35. The content was also minimal. Several students, for instance, chose Christopher Columbus "because he discovered America" but said little beyond that.

The greatest gains between the pre- and post-tests were in reading comprehension. It appears that students were able to use the reading strategies emphasized in the classes to make more sense out of texts. It may also be that because of the increased group and pair work, they had had success during the course that allowed them to approach the comprehension task with more confidence. Finally, the improved reading test scores may simply reflect the effect of increased reading. It appears that more time is needed to develop student writing skills than to improve reading. Krashen (1984) hypothesizes that writers need comprehensible

input in the form of reading to develop their skills. This suggests that the writing of these students will show improvement with time and with continued reading.

Despite the lack of evidence from pre- and post- tests of academic gains, the course grades indicate improved academic performance. In addition, the students in the program showed changes in attitude toward school. These students had had little academic success before the sheltered immersion classes, and their general attitude toward school was negative. However, the comments in their journals and the result of a questionnaire indicate a significant attitudinal change. Figure 1 records the questions and the student responses.

(insert fig. 1 here)

Student journal responses also indicated a generally positive attitude toward the program. One such response is reproduced in Figure 2.

(insert fig. 2 here)

Another student commented that this was the first class in which she had passed a test without cheating. A number of entries echoed the sentiments of one student who wrote, "this class is pretty fun to be in because we have nice teachers for the class and if the teachers weren't here to help us where would we be we all would be dumb."

Both student grades, and student attitude questionnaires and journals show that students made cognitive and affective gains as the result of participation in the pilot program. While these results reflect the performance of a limited number of students and teachers in a small pilot study, they are sufficiently positive to warrant the establishment of further experimental programs of sheltered immersion content area classes for older LEP students. Such classes appear to help these students with English and with their school subjects. Perhaps most importantly, success in the Sunnyside classes improved student attitudes toward school and also gave them both the self-confidence and the needed skills that may enable them to reverse their previous patterns of failure.

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STUDENT'S PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES

I. ON A SCALE OF 1 - 5, SHOW HOW YOU FEEL ABOUT THE ITEMS LISTED. AGREE OR DISAGREE BY CHECKING (✓) YOUR RESPONSES AS FOLLOWS:

- Check: #5 if you strongly agree
 4 if you agree a little
 3 if you are undecided
 2 if you disagree a little
 1 if you strongly disagree

	5	4	3	2	1
1. I was able to participate more in this class because of the way it was conducted.	58%	30%	10%		2%
2. Working in groups helped me.	70%	25%	5%		
3. I liked working in groups.	62%	25%	10%	3%	
4. The teacher(s) make an extra effort to help us understand the material and learn more.	58%	15%	11%	6%	
5. The class was presented in an interesting way.	49%	35%	8%	8%	
6. There were many different types of activities that benefited us.	27%	50%	13%	10%	
7. I was ready for tests because we studied, discussed and reviewed the material in class several different ways.	48%	25%	5%	12%	10%
8. I liked this class because I learned.	55%	35%	8%	2%	
9. I would like more classes conducted like this one.	70%	20%	5%		5%
10. I got to know many of the students in class.	60%	26%	7%	7%	
11. I feel better about school because of the help I got in class.	53%	21%	18%	8%	
12. I learned some skills in this class that I can use in my other classes next year.	43%	47%	10%		

Fig. 1

6-14-85

I think this Class is not too bad, this is my first time in summer school, and I have began to like it. Even though its kind of boring sitting in your seat for 5 hrs. but with the work we do it makes it alot easier to go throu the day. Working in groups is not too bad either because you get to meet other classmates and it gives you an opportunity to see how much they interested in this class too, and it make work alot easier cause you can all work and help each other. I feel that the time I will be here it will be worthwhile and I will be getting something out of it.

Excerpts from
student journals
Sunnyside Summer
School Project

1985

I enjoyed when we got into a group today and now we thought of what to write on the board from what we could remember. It was long but fun. I also like the movies.