

Language Attitudes in the United States: An Analysis of the English-Only Movement and Bilingual Education

Sally Horton

Introduction

In 1981 California Senator S. I. Hayakawa introduced into Congress a bill that would become a landmark in the history of language policy in the United States. This bill, known as English Only, seeks to establish English as the official language of the US. It has sparked debate from advocates of speakers of other languages and has inspired the creation of counter English-Only movements and programs. In the past, there has been no need to constitute English as the official language of the U.S. Why now? Throughout our history, we note that English-Only policies and English immersion programs have left our Limited English Speakers at a disadvantage. On the other hand, programs such as bilingual education and English Plus have emerged to aid and accommodate non English-speaking U.S. residents. These programs have helped Limited English Speakers gain a sense of competency in an English-speaking environment. In this paper, I will argue against English-Only programs and in favor of bilingual education and English Plus programs.

The English-Only movement, which currently seeks to declare English as the official language of the United States, is the result of centuries of debate and disagreement over the role of language within America. The debate over making English America's official language reaches back to the earliest days of United States history. Over a century before America declared independence from England, North America was a rich linguistic environment. In 1664, there were at

Chrestomathy: Annual Review of Undergraduate Research, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, College of Charleston

Volume 4, 2005: pp. 124-145

© 2005 by the College of Charleston, Charleston SC 29424, USA.

All rights to be retained by the author.

least eighteen languages spoken on Manhattan alone (Crawford 1991, 19). Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, English coexisted in America with numerous other languages, such as German, Dutch, French, Swedish, and Polish. One community that was especially prevalent at this time was the German-speaking community in Pennsylvania. These citizens were hesitant to completely surrender their native language; by the end of the seventeenth Century, they were operating educational programs, of which some were exclusively German-language and some were German-English bilingual. However, at this time, and throughout the eighteenth Century, pro-bilingual education sentiment prevailed. For example, the majority of the nation's founders accepted their non English-speaking constituents, and they even worked to promote bilingualism among American citizens. One measure the government took that accommodated some non English-speaking groups was to print important documents such as the Articles of Confederation in German and French.

However, there was a strong need for unity in the new American nation, and many citizens felt that a common language could help establish a national identity. This common language was to be English, and it would be established in America at the expense of other languages. For example, attitudes toward German began to change. In 1795, a bill came to the House of Representatives proposing that federal laws be printed in German as well as English, but this bill was defeated, reflecting the government's preference for English as the most widely spoken language in America.

Historically, language attitudes have tended to reflect the social concerns of the public. Examples of this theory are evident in the attitudes toward bilingual education in American society. Bilingual education programs have been in existence for centuries, but in the nineteenth century there was a revival of nativism, which signified the beginning of a decrease in the number of bilingual education programs present in the United States. Even so, there were advocates of bilingual education and cultural tolerance at this time. One such advocate was William Torrey Harris, United States Commissioner of Education in the late nineteenth Century, who felt that the coercive, "sink or swim" method of linguistic assimilation was neither fair nor effective (Crawford 1991, 21). Bilingual education programs did exist

at this time; there were many programs that taught English along with many European languages. German-English bilingual programs were common, for example, as German-American citizens felt especially strong about maintaining their language and their heritage. However, attitudes were significantly different toward indigenous American languages. Americans were far less willing to assimilate the Native Americans into their culture, so Native American children were removed from their homes on reservations and sent to boarding schools where they were punished for speaking any language other than English. Similar attitudes existed toward other indigenous minority groups, such as the Spanish-speaking population of the Southwest after the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo. Prior to this treaty, much of the present-day American Southwest was Mexican territory, and it was populated by Mexican citizens. However, the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo converted that Mexican territory into American land, and its residents were forced to either move back across Mexican borders or become Americans. Those who stayed were forced to learn English.

At the turn of the 20th Century, measures to assimilate non English-speaking residents of the United States became even more aggressive. These measures arose from fear that immigrants were resisting learning English. In a moment of prevailing xenophobia, many schools used English immersion programs to teach immigrant children. The educational system was generally not receptive to foreign cultures and languages; children who did not speak English were considered unable to learn. Educators thought that English immersion was the only way these immigrants could be forced to replace their native languages with English. We are now able to reflect back on these educational methods and deduce that this process of assimilation was not effective. At the time, fear that new American citizens would be unwilling to assimilate propelled support for English immersion programs. The English language was perceived as a patriotic symbol of unity and freedom. President Theodore Roosevelt expressed the idea that being “American” meant renouncing one’s own individual heritage language and values (Crawford 1991, 23). World Wars I and II fueled fear of not only speakers of German, but also speakers of almost any foreign language.

Language restrictionism waned in the mid 20th Century as a result

of the Civil Rights movement, which brought about many changes in policy regarding bilingual education. One example of these changes is the 1968 introduction of Title VII. This act, signed into law by President Johnson, allotted funding for school districts interested in establishing bilingual education programs to meet the rising needs of students with limited English-speaking ability (Fillmore, 343). Title VII was a turning point in the fight to promote and encourage bilingual education, and it served as a foundation for various bilingual programs that were set up during the Carter administration (1977-1981). These bilingual education programs sought to help those who were thought to be at an educational disadvantage because of their limited English-speaking skills. The programs aimed to ease non English-speakers' transition to English as well as to promote bilingualism. Usually, the methodology for these programs consisted of academic instruction in both English and the students' native languages. This proved to be a much more effective method of learning English than the earlier "sink or swim" approach (Crawford 1998).

In the 1980s, however, the sense emerged that bilingual education programs were divisive, unnecessary and expensive, and most had their funding cut under President Reagan. The English-Only legislation introduced by Senator S. I. Hayakawa in 1981 resulted from this shift. The Constitutional amendment proposed by Senator Hayakawa continues to be a highly controversial bill. The United States has never had an official language, and many worry that the establishment of English as the nation's only official language will put some minority groups at a disadvantage. Since the proposal of the English-Only amendment, proponents of the bill have formed lobbying groups such as U.S. English and ProEnglish. However, there are many opponents to this movement who claim that the consequences of an official language would be devastating. The establishment of an official language would most likely see the elimination of many of the nation's bilingual education programs, and government services would not have to be, and would not likely be, offered in any language other than English. The consequences would be highly detrimental to groups such as the growing Hispanic population in the United States. Spanish-speaking American citizens throughout the Southwest and in cities such as Miami and New York as well as other non English-speaking

groups would be very adversely affected. And still supporters of the English-Only movement fight for the nation-wide establishment of an official tongue. In fact, many states have already established English as their official language. A few states recognize the needs of their non English-speaking citizens and have adopted English Plus policies as an alternative to English-Only measures.

English Only

The English-Only movement has sparked a tremendous amount of controversy since its introduction in 1981. In the decades following the initial attempt to pass the Hayakawa bill, countless issues have arisen as a result of an increased awareness of the varied linguistic landscape that makes up the United States. Many deal with bilingual services offered by the government, as in the case of bilingual ballots, court translation services, social welfare, etc. Still other issues are present within school districts, as in the case of bilingual education. These matters have become a focal point of public debate over the English-Only movement, and to understand the driving force behind them, one must first recognize the motivation behind the push to make English the official language of the United States. Some proponents of the English-Only campaign will argue that their concerns are over cost, efficiency, even unity (Crawford 1998). However, further analysis of arguments for and consequences of the English-Only movement will show that the primary motivations are power and xenophobia. As linguist Noam Chomsky (1979) states, “questions of language are basically questions of power” (191). By recognizing that the English-Only movement is driven by exaggerated fears and unfounded assumptions and that its application actually violates civil rights, one can clearly see the faults in a bill that would make English this nation’s official language.

One of the most popular arguments of proponents of the English-Only movement is that English is losing ground to other languages in America due to the fact that the most recent immigrants are becoming more resistant to learning English (Crawford 1998). However, this claim is unfounded. It is true that the number of non-native English speakers in America is growing. The Center for Immigration Studies released its most recent figures last year, reporting that the 2004 Census

showed a population of 34.24 million immigrants – both legal and illegal – living in the United States, the largest immigrant population ever recorded in American history. It also shows tremendous growth in this population in the four years following the previous census; from the time that the 2000 census was taken to the time of the 2004 census, the number of immigrants living in the U.S. rose by 4.3 million (www.cis.org). However, there is another population whose growth exceeds that of recent immigrants: the portion of the American population that is bilingual. To illustrate the point that English is not becoming devalued or losing ground in today's America, James Crawford (1998) shows that the number of people who speak another language in addition to English is growing faster than the number of non-native English speakers

Although research and statistics show otherwise, supporters of the English-Only movement fear that English is in danger of being replaced as the most commonly spoken language of the United States. English-Only advocates seem to have a certain nostalgia for the immigrants of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Back then, they claim, new arrivals to the U.S. were eager to assimilate to American life and culture and that they learned English quickly and willingly (Crawford 1998). This is a stark contrast to the picture they paint of today's immigrants, who are supposedly much less willing to make an effort to assimilate. English-Only advocates assert that the attitude of recent immigrants is divisive and could cause English to be pushed out of the mainstream by any number of "minority languages" (Crawford 1998).

On the issue of the rising number of immigrants in America, any concern on the part of the proponents of the English-Only bill is driven by fears unsupported by research and statistics. As Crawford shows, the number of immigrants that speak English very well rose 93 percent between 1980 and 1990. In 1990, only three percent of United States residents reported that they could speak English less than "well" or "very well." And in the same year, less than one percent of the U.S. population claimed not to speak any English at all. These figures clearly do not support the claim that immigrants to America have been resistant to learning English. In fact, so many immigrants have so readily assimilated to American language and culture that 70

percent of all second-generation immigrants are either dominant or monolingual English speakers.

If none of this research supports the claim that English is in danger of falling out of use, where do these fears come from? What makes English-Only advocates so afraid of the disappearance of English? Upon close examination of the English-Only bill, one cannot help but get the feeling that a sentiment of xenophobia underlies the very foundation of the movement. Supporters of English-Only legislation all too often cite arguments that are based on racist fear of recent waves of Hispanic and Asian immigrants. Xenophobia has driven the English-Only movement for decades; supporters fear that the immigrant population, with its varied languages, is overtaking America. It is difficult not to see the irony in this fear, when one considers that America was virtually built by immigrants. Immigrant groups have always formed a part of the varied landscape of American society. Still, an anti-immigrant sentiment pervades the opinions of many English-Only supporters. For them, English is a unifying symbol of American patriotism, and any foreign language-speaking population is a threat to that unity (Crawford 1991, 23). This xenophobia drives some people to make harsh judgments or enact strict policies that devalue other non-English languages.

Supporters of the English-Only movement argue that their concerns over the use of non-English languages are not based on xenophobia, but on a need for communication. They claim that the use of foreign languages is a barrier to effective communication (Reese 1999). One practical application of this idea is in the workplace; there are some companies in the United States, such as Premier Operator Services in Dallas, Texas, that have begun to enforce regulations to make their workplaces English-Only environments (www.englishfirst.org). According to R. Reese, these measures are highly controversial, but the companies that implement them argue for their necessity. Companies claim that when their workforce is speaking more than one language, they do not accomplish their goals efficiently. Language barriers are seen as rude and divisive, so some companies begin to enforce English-Only rules in an effort to promote unity and efficiency. An additional concern for some institutions is safety. Places such as hospital operating rooms claim that language

barriers cannot only be inefficient but also hazardous. However, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission has suggested that these English-Only workplaces may be violating the rights of the non-English speaking workers (Reese 1999).

One very powerful and effective argument against the English-Only movement is that any English-Only legislation would violate people's rights under the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment. The 14th Amendment guarantees equal treatment of every resident of the United States, as stated by Section 1:

All persons born or naturalized in the United States and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.

The American Civil Liberties Union believes that English-Only legislation that made void any laws requiring the federal government to provide services in non-English languages would grossly violate the rights of non-English speakers ("English Only"). Examples of the services that would no longer have to be offered in other languages might include healthcare, education, welfare, job training, translation for crime victims and witnesses in court, voting ballots, driving license exams, AIDS prevention education, etc. ("English Only"). Clearly, any law that eliminated these services would violate the equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment.

Nonetheless, there are still supporters who foresee more positive consequences to the passage of English-Only legislation than negative ones. Some argue that the programs and services offered by the government in non-English languages are expensive and unnecessary (Crawford 1998). They support the English-Only movement because they think an English-Only bill would reduce government spending. Other advocates view multilingual programs as unnecessary because, as they argue, in order for an immigrant to become a citizen of the

United States, he or she must first pass an English proficiency exam. Still others argue that the elimination of multilingual government services would not infringe on the rights of the illegal immigrant population. They argue that the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment preserves only the rights of natural born citizens or legal residents of the United States. But in a 1982 decision, the United States Supreme Court issued an opinion disagreeing with this argument.

The legal battle over the role of the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment as it applies to illegal immigrants began in the state of Texas in 1975. During the spring of that year, the Texas state legislature passed a law that would allow school districts to deny free public education to children of immigrants who could not be proven to be legal citizens of the United States. A long legal battle ensued, beginning with a class-action lawsuit in 1977 filed on behalf of children of illegal immigrants who had been denied free public schooling by Texas's Tyler Independent School district. A federal district court ruled in favor of the children in that case and again in 1980, saying that the Tyler Independent School District's refusal to provide free education to all residents of their district was in violation of the 14th Amendment. When a federal appeals court upheld this ruling in 1981, the Tyler school board, along with superintendent James Plyler, decided to appeal to the United States Supreme Court. The decision in *Plyler vs. Doe* was handed down in 1982; in a 5-4 decision the Supreme Court upheld the previous three rulings of the lower courts. The majority opinion, issued by Justice William Brennan, stated, "We cannot ignore the significant social costs borne by our Nation when select groups are denied the means to absorb the values and skills upon which our social order rests" ("Education"). By recognizing that illegal immigrants are protected under the 14th Amendment to the Constitution in exactly the same manner as the rights of "persons born or naturalized in the United States," *Plyler vs. Doe* proved to be a significant milestone in the fight for the rights of all immigrants to the United States, both legal and illegal. By maintaining the operation of multilingual federal services, our government is assuring that every person in the United States receives equal treatment under the law.

There are many motivations that can be found behind the controversy surrounding the English-Only movement. Members of

both sides of the argument will cite different reasons for their opinions on the push to make English the official language of the United States. However, for authors like James Crawford the controversy boils down to a power struggle. “Ultimately,” Crawford (2000) states, “language politics are determined by material interests – struggles for social and economic supremacy – which normally lurk beneath the surface of the public debate” (“Anatomy”).

Bilingual Education

One issue that has emerged as a central point of controversy in the debate over the English-Only movement is bilingual education. Researchers have concluded that bilingual education programs help promote second language acquisition, and since English-language skills are tremendously helpful – if not entirely necessary – to function in the United States, the acquisition of English is of utmost importance for non English-speaking immigrants. For many people, the program is seen as transitional; bilingual education is thought to be an effective means of assimilating speakers of other languages into an English-speaking society. It was not until 1968 that bilingual education became a federal issue. The passage that year of The Bilingual Education Act, or Title VII of the Elementary Secondary Education Act, marked the first time that federal funds were allocated for educating Limited English Proficient students using bilingual education programs (Fillmore 343). Although bilingual education met little opposition immediately following its introduction, it was not long before questions began to emerge which made this issue a controversial one. Arguing that bilingual programs are ineffective and a waste of time and money, opponents to bilingual education began to push anti-bilingual legislation. They have helped pass legislation such as California’s 1998 law known as Proposition 227, which mandates the use of English-only instruction throughout the state (Wiley, 331).

In “Bilingual Education: The Debate Continues,” Stephen D. Krashen (2001) offers a clear understanding of the structure of such programs. Krashen defines bilingual education programs as having the following characteristics:

1. They teach subject matter in the primary language;

2. They develop literacy in the primary language; and
3. They provide comprehensible input in the second language in the form of English as a second language (ESL) classes and “sheltered” subject matter teaching.

Although this basic format is relatively standardized, aspects of the program have caused national controversy, such as the amount of English-language instruction educators provide. Examples of the misconceptions that have emerged in the continuing debate over bilingual education revolve around the effectiveness of alternative programs such as English immersion, the government cost involved in providing bilingual education, and the government-funded research studies that are used as a basis for judging the value of bilingual programs.

One issue at the heart of the bilingual education debate is the issue of efficiency. Bilingual education opponents argue that instead of wasting time in programs that strive to teach children a second language through use of their native language, immigrant children should be enrolled in English immersion programs. However, research has shown that total language immersion is not an effective method for the acquisition of a second language. Coercive, sink-or-swim methods have been employed for centuries. Nevertheless, as early as the nineteenth century, these methods were shown to be counterproductive (Crawford 1991, 21). Now some people fear a return to the sink-or-swim methodology of the past. In 1986, when Philadelphia saw a rise in its immigrant population, the city attempted to accommodate non English-speaking children in a program known as English for Speakers of Other Languages Plus Immersion. This program was designed to expose students to native speakers of English under the assumption that the more practice the children received with English, the faster they would learn. However, what the program actually entailed was more time spent in mainstream classrooms, where little was learned or even understood (Crawford 1991, 118). This immersion program – as well as other similar immersion programs – was determined to be ineffective.

Opponents of bilingual education claim that English immersion programs employ superior methodologies and end with favorable

results. Keith Baker, co-author of a controversial government study on bilingual education, has his own theory on English immersion. His hypothesis states that language immersion should work because “Practice makes perfect” and “English is best learned by using it as much as possible throughout the school day” (quoted in Crawford 1991, 118). This hypothesis tends to embody the argument of many opponents of bilingual education programs, but there are two main faults to this argument: it is not supported by research data and it does not account for the various degrees of language immersion in different programs.

One fundamental question that must be examined in the case supporting language immersion programs is the question of exactly how much English-language instruction is required to qualify a curriculum as one of English immersion. This is a highly important matter in that it could affect the validity of the arguments of many proponents of immersion programs. For example, in 1987 supporters of language immersion hailed a program in El Paso, Texas as a success; this program had been characterized as an English-only curriculum. However, later it surfaced that this characterization had been the result of a journalistic error, and the El Paso school district clarified that their program was a “true bilingual education program” whose daily instruction included 60 to 90 minutes of native-language instruction (Crawford 1991, 119). Coincidentally, this “true bilingual education program” is not very different from a definition of immersion programs given by bilingual-education opponent Keith Baker, who claims that many immersion programs include native-language instruction for 30 to 60 minutes per day. So exactly how much native-language instruction can an educational program include before it shifts from an immersion program to one of bilingual education? The answer to this question is unclear, making it difficult to distinguish English immersion from bilingual education in some cases. This lack of distinction is highly problematic for advocates of English immersion.

Another problem in the argument for English immersion is the lack of evidence of the effectiveness of these programs. Of all the educational techniques that have been employed to aid in the assimilation of speakers of other languages to American society, relatively few have been purely English-immersion models. One state

that has employed such a model is California, where Proposition 227 supposedly abolished bilingual education, but still allowed for one year of “sheltered immersion” before students would be integrated into mainstream classrooms (Krashen, 152). Following the passage of Proposition 227, several studies were conducted that examined the effectiveness of this one year of “sheltered English immersion,” and they all concluded that one year was an insufficient amount of time to prepare students for mainstream learning (Krashen, 153). One study conducted by Ramírez (1992) even shows that students enrolled in immersion programs received insufficient preparation not only from the first year of instruction, but after two, three, and even four years in such a program. Clearly, there is some deficiency inherent to language immersion programs that does not support a “practice-makes-perfect” hypothesis.

The fundamental flaw of language immersion programs is a matter of comprehension. As Crawford (1998) points out, “second language input must be comprehensible to promote second-language acquisition” (“Common Fallacies”). In other words, opponents of language immersion programs are not surprised at the inefficacy of such programs, since children are unable to learn the subject material if they cannot first understand the language of instruction. Bilingual-education supporters assert that bilingual programs are especially valuable in that they assure that subject material is understandable to the students by offering instruction in the students’ native language. Furthermore, advocates of bilingual education argue that this subject knowledge is transferable to a second language.

Despite the proposed benefits of bilingual education programs in the comprehension of both subject material and language, opposition to these programs still exists. Many opponents claim that these programs do not facilitate the learning of English, but that they actually waste time and take away from English acquisition by maintaining native-language instruction. They believe that this process only slows the acquisition of English, as opposed to bilingual-education supporters who believe these programs help develop critical learning skills. Opponents to bilingual education view this educational approach as a barrier to the assimilation of speakers of other languages into American society.

Opponents of bilingual education cite limited English exposure as a fundamental flaw of such programs. Crawford (1998) addresses this common misconception by offering statistics collected from various school districts across the nation. His study shows that 28 percent of Limited English Proficient students receive no native-language instruction; of those students who are enrolled in bilingual education programs, one-third receive more than 75 percent of their instruction in English, one-third receive 40 to 75 percent in English, and only one-third receive less than 40 percent of instruction in English. These statistics show that most of the nation's bilingual programs deliver a significant portion of instruction in English, despite criticisms that bilingual education is operating in such a way as to inhibit exposure to the English language.

Another criticism that opponents have of Bilingual Education is that these programs are expensive and incur unnecessary costs to the United States government and to individual school districts. Opponents of bilingual education argue that school districts would see a financial advantage in implementing English-immersion programs. However, research studies have shown that there is no substantial difference in the cost of bilingual education programs and English immersion programs. A recent study conducted in California shows the incremental cost of these two programs as being comparable each year (Crawford 1998). Based on such studies, cost should not be a factor in determining the value of bilingual programs.

Many negative opinions of bilingual education are formed based on research studies that are conducted to evaluate the efficacy of such programs. The report on Title VII conducted by the American Institutes for Research (AIR) in 1977-78 is one of these research studies (Crawford 1991, 87). This study was intended to be a progress report for Title VII, examining any progress that had been made in the 10 years following its introduction. The study concluded that no meaningful results had come about in the 10 years of bilingual instruction since Title VII was passed. Critics of Title VII use the lack of positive results as evidence of the inefficacy of bilingual education. However, bilingual-education supporters cite "poorly designed research" as the reason for the lack of positive findings (Crawford 1991, 87). They noted that rather than examining a model

bilingual-education program, the AIR study observed various programs labeled as “bilingual,” and they had neglected to control for any possible variables (Crawford 1991, 88). Advocates of bilingual instruction argue that definitive opinions on bilingual education should not be formed from research as flawed as the AIR.

Another example of a research study that has influenced public opinion on the subject of bilingual education is the Baker-de Kanter report of 1980. This study, overseen by the Education Department of the Carter Administration, was designed to examine the effectiveness of Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) to determine if it justified a mandate and also to explore any alternatives to TBE. The study ultimately determined that “No consistent evidence supports the effectiveness of transitional bilingual education” (quoted in Crawford 1991, 92). However, bilingual-education advocates again question the methods of the two researchers, claiming the study neglected to address key issues such as isolating characteristics of successful bilingual education programs versus unsuccessful ones (Crawford 1991, 92). While opponents of bilingual education use studies like the AIR report and the Baker-de Kanter report to bolster their arguments, bilingual-education advocates cite faulty research methods as the reason for negative outcomes. As a solution to these types of questions, authors like James Crawford and Stephen Krashen offer research guidelines and advice regarding the faults of existing research methods. For example, Krashen advocates a research model resembling the scientific method, which would evaluate bilingual education objectively and control for variables (Krashen, 141). Crawford points out the flaws in the current research methodologies, citing neglect for the recognition of diversity that exists in bilingual education, “technical obstacles” to evaluating bilingual instruction, and political pressures that influence research studies (Crawford 1991, 88). With all the controversy surrounding bilingual education policy and research in the political arena, English-Only opponents have begun looking to other alternatives that will promote not only the acquisition of English by speakers of other languages, but also the preservation of heritage languages through educational initiatives.

English Plus

English Plus is the most recent concept to emerge from the debate over the English-Only movement. Throughout the decades that have followed the introduction of English-Only legislation, opponents to the movement have been advocating programs that are designed to aid non English-speaking immigrants in their transition into an English-speaking society. The programs that English-Only opponents support have primarily consisted in bilingual education; these programs are important, and research has shown them to be effective in the acquisition of English. However, recently a number of shortcomings of bilingual education have been exposed, even by some opponents of the English-Only movement. They argue that some bilingual education programs put too much emphasis on the acquisition of English and not enough on the retention and development of native languages (Gindis 2000). Some English-Only opponents insist that bilingual education programs are essentially a transitional tool. In response to these arguments, as well as to those of English-Only advocates, a new program has emerged known as English Plus. The theory behind English Plus is that every resident of the United States should have the opportunity to learn English *plus* additional languages (Lewelling 1997). This concept would apply to speakers of other languages in the form of a type of bilingual education program that would not only teach English, but would also work to maintain native languages. English Plus would also be applicable to native speakers of English in that it would work to attain proficiency in a language other than English while at the same time continuing to develop English-language skills (Lewelling 1997). The English Plus concept has come about as an alternative to both English-Only programs and bilingual education by acknowledging the importance of English-language skills in American society while simultaneously recognizing the value of the native languages of America's immigrants. Although English Plus is in its early stages, it is already inspiring controversy. Its advocates argue its importance in issues ranging from establishing foreign relations to maintaining language as a part of identity. However, there are opponents to English Plus whose arguments include the claim that the negative consequences of bilingualism outweigh the benefits. Policies are beginning to emerge regarding English Plus,

which will undoubtedly fuel public debate on the subject in the future.

The defining feature of the English Plus approach to language education is that its ultimate goal is multilingualism. Multilingualism – specifically, bilingualism – has been criticized for its possible effects on the brain and learning, but recent research studies have shown that bilingualism actually enhances cognitive ability. In “The Cognitive Advantages of Balanced Bilingualism,” Lisa Chipongian (2000) discusses recent research findings. Over the last 20 years, researchers have shown a positive correlation between childhood bilingualism and the development of cognitive skills. Furthermore, it is now known that bilingualism promotes “classification skills, concept formation, analogical reasoning, visual-spatial skills, creativity, and other cognitive gains” (Chipongian 2000). Proponents of English Plus cite research findings like these to bolster their case against English-Only legislation. English-Plus advocates argue that a heightened development of cognitive ability is one of many advantages to the simultaneous development of English and foreign-language skills.

Although English-Plus supporters value bilingualism as the principle benefit of such programs, opponents of English Plus name bilingualism as a negative consequence. These opponents challenge the implementation of English Plus measures, citing research studies from the early twentieth century that conclude that bilingualism causes “mental confusion” (Darcy 1953). In some cases, negative opinions of bilingualism are based on outdated “scientific” models that depict the brain as a weighing scale whose two platforms represent two different languages. According to this model, the more a person places on one side of the scale, the less he or she can place on the other; in other words, the more a person learns of one language, the less he or she can develop the other. This model implies that developing two languages simultaneously can cause one or both of the languages to be thrown “off balance” (Chipongian 2000). There are also “scientific” models that claim that different languages are kept completely separate in the brain (Chipongian 2000). The implication of this hypothesis is that knowledge acquired in one language is not transferable to the other language, and therefore, bilingual education is counterproductive and ineffective. Although this model has also been disproved, opponents of English Plus continue to cite impaired cognitive ability

as a direct consequence of bilingualism.

Despite the arguments from opponents of English Plus that bilingualism confuses the brain and hinders cognitive development, recent research shows that not only is bilingualism beneficial to cognitive ability, but it is fostered more effectively by English Plus programs than transitional bilingual education. A study conducted by Dr. Boris Gindis (2000) concluded that the effect of bilingualism on a child is highly dependent on the type of bilingual education the child is receiving. He explains that there are two different models for acquiring a second language: the “additive” model entails the acquisition of a second language in addition to an already-developed native language, while the “subtractive” model implies the total replacement of a native language with a second language. Gindis (2000) argues that the subtractive model advocated by English-Only supporters may be a “core” factor in cumulative cognitive deficiency” in some children. This study, combined with all those that have discovered the cognitive benefits of bilingualism, constitute a strong base for arguments favoring English Plus.

One of the perceived benefits of English Plus is the retention of native languages and, therefore, of native identities. Since one’s language is an integral part of one’s identity, the two are inseparable. Some opponents of the English-Only movement argue that the loss of identity associated with native languages is one of the most devastating consequences of the proposed English-Only legislation. Although English has not been established as the official language of the entire United States, various non English-speaking populations have long been subjected to English-Only policies and education; the effects of these policies on some native communities can already be seen. Crawford (1998) illustrates this point using Native American populations. He explains that because of strict English-Only policies that were imposed on Native Americans as early as the late nineteenth Century, many Native Americans today feel alienated from their cultural heritage. Throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Native Americans were punished in school for speaking their native languages and, as a result, many now hold a negative view of bilingual education. Here, Crawford is showing the negative consequences of English-Only policies for non English-speaking groups to be twofold.

Not only are these populations being stripped of their cultural identity by being forced to assimilate into American society and culture, but also the treatment these groups are receiving under English-Only policies is helping perpetuate a negative image of bilingual education.

Since English Plus is a relatively new concept, little legislation has been introduced on the subject to date. Policy issues are undoubtedly going to be influenced by public debate, as evidenced by the development of English Plus as an alternative to English-Only policies. At this point, no English Plus legislation has been adopted at the federal level, although a resolution has been introduced into Congress. This resolution, known as the “English Plus Resolution,” has been brought before Congress every year since 1997, but no action has yet been taken to adopt it into law. The resolution embodies all the principles of the English Plus concept; it recognizes the importance of the English language within American society, but it also explains that “many residents of the United States speak native languages other than English...and these linguistic resources should be conserved and developed” (www.congress.org). The resolution also names various benefits of multilingualism, which is the fundamental goal of English Plus. Examples of these benefits as the resolution names them are enhancing America’s “competitiveness in global markets,” improving “diplomatic efforts by fostering enhanced communication and greater understanding between nations,” bolstering national security, and developing “cross-cultural understanding” (www.congress.org). The resolution explains that, in addition to the individual benefits of multilingualism such as enhanced cognitive ability and stronger cultural identity, there are positive consequences to multilingualism that the United States as a whole can enjoy, such as a better place in the world market and cultural understanding that crosses racial and ethnic lines (www.congress.org). Although this type of legislation has not been passed at the federal level, there are four states that have adopted English Plus policies. New Mexico, Oregon, Rhode Island and Washington have all passed English Plus legislation, but since the concept of English Plus is still developing, these measures have primarily served the purpose of educating these states’ citizens about language policy (Crawford 1997). English Plus could be the answer for those who criticize the English-Only movement for its unwillingness

to recognize the importance of non-English languages and who criticize transitional bilingual education programs for their encouragement of subtractive bilingualism. Until there are more English Plus education programs in existence and more states adopting English Plus legislation, it will be difficult to see what kind of results this policy produces.

Conclusion

Controversial language policies are the source of public debate on topics such as the status of the English language in America, the effectiveness of bilingual education, and the rights of immigrants. Americans can easily find themselves caught in a cycle in which public debate inspires language policy which in turn fuels more public debate. All the while, immigrants and speakers of languages other than English are losing their rights, their languages and their identities. The most promising recent development to come from the English-Only debate is English Plus, which could offer a solution to the controversial issue of language policy altogether. English Plus may be able to bridge the gap between supporters and opponents of the English-Only movement by simultaneously achieving two important goals. English Plus recognizes the importance of the English language in the United States and mandates the teaching of English, and it also emphasizes the importance of native languages to immigrant populations as well as to the entire United States. Currently, English Plus does have its limitations; English Plus measures have only been passed at the state level and only in four states, and even then the main purpose of these policies is educational. Furthermore, English Plus is certain to inspire even more public debate over topics ranging from the effects of multilingualism on the brain to the role of non-English languages within American society. Still, English Plus is the newest and most promising development to arise in response to the English-Only movement, and it may be the best solution for people on all sides of the English-Only debate.

Works Cited

Chipongian, Lisa. "The Cognitive Advantages of Balanced Bilingualism," *Brain Connection* (Scientific Learning Corporation, 2000), <http://www.brainconnection.com/topics/?main=fa/cognitive-bilingualism>.

Chomsky, Noam. *Language and Responsibility* (Harvester Press, 1979).

Crawford, James. "Anatomy of the English-Only Movement" (*Language Policy Web Site*, 2000), <http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/jwcrawford/anatomy.htm>.

Crawford, James. *Bilingual Education: History, Politics, Theory, and Practice*, 2nd ed. (Bilingual Education Services, 1991).

Crawford, James. "English Plus" (*Language Policy Web Site*, 1997), <http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/jwcrawford/engplus.htm>.

Crawford, James. "Ten Common Fallacies about Bilingual Education" (*ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics*, 1998), <http://www.ericdigests.org/1999-3/ten.htm>.

Darcy, N.T. "A Review of the Literature on the Effects of Bilingualism upon the Measure of Intelligence" *Journal of Genetic Psychology* 82 (1953).

"Education and the 14th Amendment." *Bill of Rights in Action*. 7:4 (Spring 1991).

"English Plus Resolution," 109th Congress, 1st Session. H. Con. Res. 9 (www.congress.org).

"English Only" (ACLU Briefing Paper 6, 1996), <http://www.englishfirst.org/english/ACLU.HTM>.

Fillmore, Lily Wong. "Language in Education," in Edward Finegan and John R. Rickford (eds.), *Language in the USA: Themes for the Twenty-first Century* (Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 339-360.

Gindis, Boris. "Detecting and Remediating the Cumulative Cognitive Deficit in School Age Internationally Adopted Post-institutionalized Children," *The Parent Network for the Post-Institutionalized Child* 27 (2000), pp. 1-6.

"Immigrant Population at Record High in 2004," (Center for Immigration Studies, 2004), <http://www.cis.org/articles/2004/>

back1204release.html.

Krashen, Stephen D. "Bilingual Education: The Debate Continues," in Roseann Dueñas González (ed.), *Language Ideologies: Critical Perspectives on the Official English Movement*, Vol. 2 (National Council of Teachers of English, 2001), pp. 137-160.

Lewelling, Vickie W. "Official English and English Plus: An Update," (ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics, 1997), <http://www.ericdigests.org/1997-4/english.htm>.

Reese, R. "Language Diversity and the Politics of the English-Only Movement in the U.S.," (34th World Congress of the International Institute of Sociology, 1999).

Shim, Maria. "English-Only Workplace Suits Continue to Rise," <http://www.englishfirst.org/workplace/workplaceacluprop63.htm> (2000).

Wiley, Terrence G. "Language Planning, Language Policy, and the English-Only Movement," in Edward Finegan and John R. Rickford (eds.), *Language in the USA: Themes for the Twenty-first Century* (Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 319-38.