

CHAPTER THREE BILINGUAL EDUCATION AND LATINOS

“By denying these children a basic education, we deny them the ability to live within the structure of our civic institutions, and foreclose any realistic opportunity that they will contribute in even the smallest way to the progress of the nation”
Justice Thurgood Marshall

We have discussed in the previous chapter that Latinos socio-economic status ranks at the lowest levels of the American structure. Hispanics have yet to reach income standards that can be leveled to other ethnic groups, but especially that coincide with the efforts they exert.

There is no doubt that a weak condition of education is a salient element for economic stagnation in any society, moreover, the picture becomes much worse for those people struggling to succeed in a different culture, but more importantly, when they must overcome a different language.

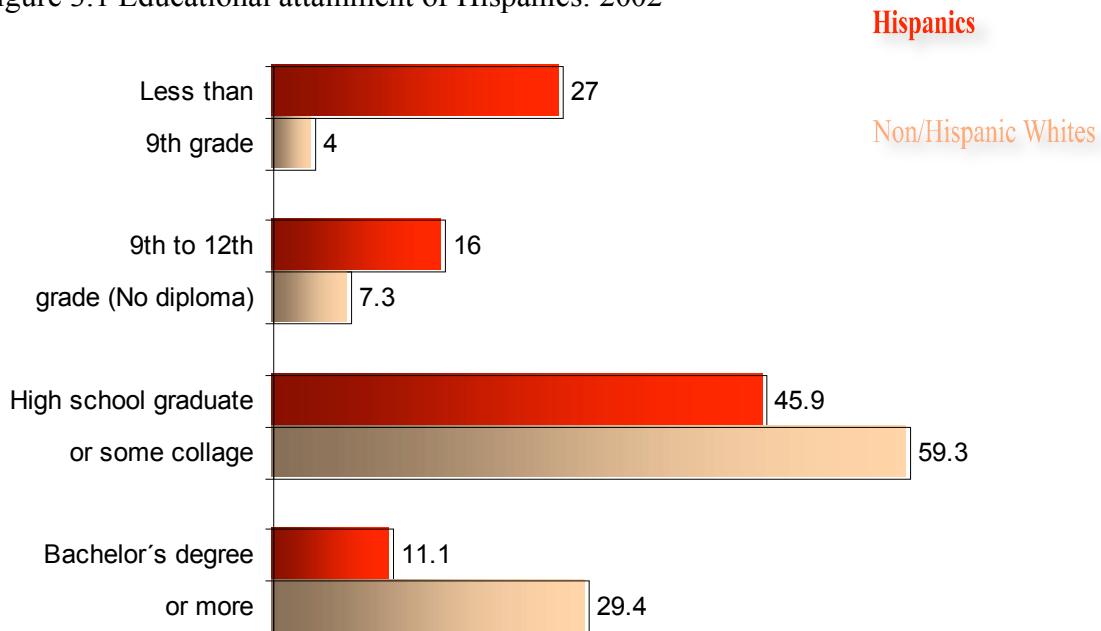
3.1 Educational standing of Latinos.

It is no news that most Hispanics come from impoverished regions in their countries of origin where formal education is deficient and the general population hardly finishes the very first stages of it. Upon arrival to the United States, most adult Hispanic immigrants have little opportunity for the continuation of their education -clearly due to long hours of work. Again, there is no news there. Unsurprisingly, Latino educational achievement falls well behind the average.

According to the figures released by the Census Bureau, “more than two in five Hispanics aged 25 and older have not graduated from high school (Ramirez)”. That is,

only 57.0 percent of Hispanics had graduated from high school in comparison to the 88.7 percent of non-Hispanic Whites.¹

Figure 3.1 Educational attainment of Hispanics: 2002



Source: Ramirez 5 U.S. Census Bureau, Annual Demographic Supplement to the March 2002 Current Population Survey.

It seems that, by considering these numbers, the adult Latino population does not have a satisfying educational condition that would make them highly valued laborers in a high-tech service economy. However, in realizing that 34.4 percent of Hispanics are under 18 years old, the future possibly presents a different picture if plans for education act accordingly.

¹ Despite lacking a high school diploma, low-skilled immigrants still outperform native dropouts in the labor market. Low-skilled male immigrants are more likely to work, as shown by their higher labor force participation rates, and less likely to be unemployed. (See: Orrenius, Pia)

3.1.1 Hispanic children in American schools.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in year 2000 over 11.4 million Hispanic children under age 18 were living in the United States. That is 16 percent of all children under age 18. Following the pattern of Hispanic population in general, the number of Hispanic children has increased faster than children of non-Hispanic White and African American origin. It is worth noticing that the projections suggest that by year 2020 one in five children under the age of 18 will trace its ethnicity to Latino heritage.

These outstanding numbers are caused by the change of immigration patterns -recently turning from male-exclusive to family-composed- as well as the relatively high fertility rates of Hispanic women². Thus, the number of Spanish-speaking children attending American schools has exponentially increased.

3.1.2 Immigrant children and education rights.

The Supreme Court decision on *Plyler v Doe* in 1982 recalled the right of the children of undocumented immigrants to attend public schools³. Unsurprisingly, the reasoning behind it, seems strikingly obvious to any society regarding the education of its resident children, even if they are residence status is irregular:

“The record is clear that many of the undocumented children disabled by this classification [illegality] will remain in this country indefinitely, and that some will become lawful residents or citizens of the United States. It is difficult to understand precisely what the State hopes to achieve by promoting the creation and perpetuation of a subclass of illiterates within our boundaries, surely adding

² In year 2000, Hispanic births averaged 105.9 deliveries per 1,000 females ages 15 to 44. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. National Center for Health Statistics, National Vital Statistics System, cit. in Status and Trends in the Education of Hispanics.

³ The Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment declares that no person would be denied the equal protection of the laws when under the jurisdiction of the State.

to the problems and costs of unemployment, welfare, and crime. It is thus clear that whatever savings might be achieved by denying these children an education, they are wholly insubstantial in light of the costs involved to these children, the State, and the Nation(U.S. Supreme Court, Plyler v Doe)”

The education of immigrant children, particularly those with an irregular residence status, remains as one of the greatest challenges of the American education system. Paul Green reminds us that social and educational opportunities for these children “are typically hindered by frequent moves, poverty, gaps in previous schooling, and language barriers” (51).

Looking at statistics that place Hispanics at the bottom of the academic charts, it is difficult to see the certainly harsh socio-economic elements that are far from being ideal to the learning process.

Table 3.1 Undocumented children enrolled in Public schools from Kindergarten to grade 12th.

State	Undocumented children enrolled in public k-12.
California	307,000
New York	88,000
Texas	93,900
Florida	97,200
Illinois	23,600
New Jersey	16,300
Arizona	15,000
Massachusetts	12,500

Source: Information from Fiscal Impacts of undocumented aliens, by D. Huddle (cit. in Paul Green).

Immigrant youngsters face adverse conditions that can certainly explain, in part, the low-accomplishment educational rates reflected on the statistics. Green unravels that:

“The conditions associated with the migratory lifestyle impose obstacles to social and educational achievement. These obstacles include social and cultural isolation, strenuous and hazardous work, extreme poverty, and poor health conditions” (52).

Immigrant students must perform certain chores that their non-Hispanic White peers seldom do. For some, their responsibilities go far beyond fulfilling their schoolwork and cleaning up their rooms. School attendance for most migrant children is dictated by the necessities of the household, refers Green. In fact, those needs are ever changing depending on general economic conditions. “If the family has money for rent and food, children are often allowed to attend school”. Green observes that since work availability is not reliable, children learn early that they must help their parents, thus causing that a 12 year-old migrant child may be working from 16 to 18 hours a week. Unsurprisingly, some time after kids most drop out of school (63).

Certainly, the case of most immigrant Hispanic children represents the worst case of socioeconomic conditions for Hispanic students. Others do not go thru this awful process of mobility and work, but face other challenges also as unsuitable for the learning environment. What are the conditions of a Hispanic student in today’s America? The U.S. Department of Education through the National Center for Education Statistics (Llagas, Charmaine 2003), released in 2003 some relevant data on Hispanics’ educational status and trends. The report showed meaningful information on the situation of Latino students:

- Family structure: Slightly less than two-thirds of Hispanic children live in two-parent families. Certainly, children who live with both parents have better access to more social and financial resources than children who live with a single parent.
- Health issues: In 2000, one-fourth of Hispanic children under 18 had no public or private health insurance. When children have no health insurance they are less able to access care and treatment in the event of illness or injury, the percent of children with health insurance and with vaccinations are key indicators of children's health risks. In 2000, 25 percent of all Hispanic children under age 18 were not covered by health insurance, compared to 7 percent of white and 13 percent of black children in the same age range.
- Poverty: Children living in poverty have lower educational achievement than children who are not living in poverty. In year 2000, 28 percent of Hispanic children were living in poverty compared to 9 percent of non-Hispanic Whites.
- Multicultural environment: In 2000, minorities constituted 39 percent of public school students in kindergarten through 12th grade, from that number 44 percent were Hispanic, that is, 17 percent of total enrollment. The majority of Hispanic students attending public elementary and secondary schools are enrolled in schools where minorities comprise the majority of the student population.
- Absenteeism: Hispanic 8th- and 12th- graders have higher absenteeism rates than non-Hispanic Whites. In year 2000, 26 percent of Hispanic students in the 8th grade and 34 percent of Hispanic students in the 12th grade reported that they had been absent 3 or more days in the preceding month.

- Grade retention, suspension, and expulsion. Hispanic students have retention and suspension/expulsion rates that are higher than those of non-Hispanic Whites, but lower than those of African Americans. Children are retained in grade if they are assessed not to have the academic or social skills to advance into the next grade. In 1999, 13 percent of Hispanic students in kindergarten through 12th grade had ever repeated grade in comparison to 9 percent of Whites and 18 percent of blacks.

3.1.3 The red flag: Hispanic dropout rates.

One of the most crucial elements regarding the valuation of Hispanic education is the completion of high school. The subject of quitting schooling before the acquisition of a high school degree is one of the most significant concerns on the development of Hispanics in the United States. The fact that, figures show an important number of Hispanic youngsters abandoning their high school studies has created an alarm over their labor skills in the future. According to numbers by the Department of Education, Latinos have significantly higher high school dropout rates than non-Hispanic Whites or African-American students. What is understood as “dropout” by the official statistics agencies is the percentage of youths between 16 to 24 years who are not enrolled in a high school program and who have not earned a high school credential.

In 2000, the status dropout rate for Hispanics reached 28 percent, higher than the 7 percent for non-Hispanic Whites and the 13 percent for African Americans (Llagas).⁴ However, some analysts disagree on this area, arguing that the data does not seem to

⁴ Frank Bean and Marta Tienda emphasize that the highest rates of non-completion correspond to foreign-born Mexicans and Puerto Ricans (270).

reflect an accurate picture on the proportions of Hispanic students actually quitting school.

On one side, Charmaine Llagas acknowledges that the average status drop out rate for Hispanics is, to some extent explained by the high drop out rates among Hispanic immigrants, as a matter of fact, more than one-half of these Hispanic immigrants never enrolled in a school in the United States, but are included as high school dropouts if they did not complete high school in their country of origin (40).

On the other hand, Stephen Krashen discriminates that when several factors –low English language ability, poverty, length of residence in the United States, the print environment, and family factors- which are determinant for the dropping out phenomenon are controlled statistically, then there is no difference among groups in dropout rates (The Dropout Argument).

So, are Hispanics really doing as bad as pointed out by the official statistics? Richard Fry argues that although specific Hispanic dropout figures reveal an acute problem with very serious long-term implications, the problem is more manageable than suggested by those statistics. Fry emphasizes that although Hispanics do have a high drop out rate, the fact that 35 percent of Latino youths are immigrants cannot place them under the same scrutinizing category (v). There are certainly many inadequacies regarding the assessment of the drop out rate for Latinos as a whole, Fry observes that the National Center for Education Statistics extends the age range for high school dropouts from 16 to 24 years old. He remarks that by narrowing the age range to 16-19 year olds, in the case of Latinos, portrays a clearer picture on their elementary and secondary school performance, instead of confusing data on older immigrant individuals (3).

Undoubtedly, statistics are not flawless but on this particularity, they depict an alarming situation that conveys a patronizing message to the Latino community.

3.1.4 Causes of Hispanic educational underachievement: Is bilingual education to blame?

The everlasting worrying theme of Hispanic educational underachievement has created strong opinions on Hispanic immigrants, as a matter of fact it has propelled an ethnic stereotype.

There is no questioning that a poor educational development is closely related to low incomes but certainly that is not all. Frank Bean and Marta Tienda (259-260) point out that there are four general categories that radically determine educational achievement: Family, School, Community and Ethnicity/Culture.

- Family background: Principally measured by parents' education, family income, and occupational status of the father. Interestingly, Bean and Tienda conclude that class position of the family is a great determinant to an individual's academic performance, due to the extra elements involved in constructing the savoir-faire of children. As previously discussed, Latino families are not characterized, on a general basis, by a wealthy economic standing that allows them considering extra expenses.
- School: Closely related to the economic status of the community, the school system represents a definite factor for academic performance. Quality school facilities, highly prepared teachers, and a non-segregated environment do make a difference in achieving higher goals. Amy Stuart Wells reflects on the issue and argues that regardless of income or political conditions, all

Hispanics face increasing levels of school segregation⁵ in all parts of the country (Hispanic Education in America).

- Community: A segregating environment in the community is far from being exceptional for Latinos. As a matter of fact, the Harvard Civil Rights Project found that “Latino children are now facing the most intense segregation (by race and poverty) of any ethnic and racial group for black and Latino students (cit. in Suarez-Orozco 28)”.
- Ethnic/Cultural: Bean and Tienda emphasize how the ethnic and cultural identity shapes behavior, perceptions, learning styles and interpersonal relations (259). With this in mind, we could construe that the educational standing of Latinos is profoundly marked by their cultural traditions. If these traditions and characteristics are being patronized by the mainstream ideology, Latino children would be facing an attack to the core element of their identity. Bean and Tienda stress that the belittling of the culture of the Latino student deconstructs their self esteem and leads to low achievement (260).

Could it be that Latinos are doomed by their own cultural and ethnic characteristics to not succeed? The lingering usage of the Spanish language, opposite of acquiring English proficiency, has been pointed out as the main reason for not achieving higher levels of education, and consequently economic stagnation (Mujica, Mauro www.us-english.org, Chavez, Linda www.ceousa.org).

⁵ Wells explains that the principal reason why Hispanic parents have not pushed as hard for desegregation, as African American leaders have, is because these parents believe that their children are better served in a predominantly Hispanic school where common values and culture are shared.

3.2 Bilingual Education in United States schools.

Preservation of the Spanish language thru bilingual education programs is the key element regarding the scrutiny over the increasing Latino presence. Bilingual Education programs are certainly not exclusive of Hispanics, but they have come under close surveillance due to the impacting numbers of Spanish speakers.

3.2.1 Schooling in two languages: the origin.

Actually, it was the German community who empowered by their performance in the Nation's construction, claimed the right to teach their children in their Teutonic language. During the 1700's, schools in the United States were financed by private funds and the sectarian nature of the German communities stated that ministers would function as teachers. In 1837 a Pennsylvania law permitted German schools to be founded on an equal basis with English ones, in fact, this was the only state where language equality was asked for and obtained (Leibowitz, Arnold 4). By 1840, Ohio became the first state to adopt actual bilingual education. German-English instruction was provided to students at parents' request.

Some years later, Louisiana enacted an equal law for education in French-English in 1847, and soon afterwards, in 1850, the New Mexico Territory did so for Spanish-English.

The love-hate relationship of the United States society with the instruction of its young population in other languages has been shaped by, certainly immigration waves, but also by the mistrust of certain groups of peoples, such as the Native Americans.

Actually, in 1864 congress prohibited Native Americans from being taught in their own languages. And in 1879 Native American children were forcibly separated from their families and ordered to attend boarding schools. Moreover, students were punished if caught speaking anything but English.

Contrary to what the Native Americans went through, in the 1870's William Harris – School Superintendent in St. Louis and later U.S. Commissioner of Education- spoke in behalf of Bilingual Education arguing that: “National memories and aspirations, family traditions, customs, and habits, moral and religious observances cannot be suddenly removed or changed without disastrously weakening the personality”. It was in fact Harris who established the first “kindergarten” in America, taught solely in German, to give the youngest of immigrant students an education in an environment that would not cause estrangement (History of Public Education).

By the end of the nineteenth century, several other states had passed bilingual instruction provisions. Although, many communities actually established bilingual instruction without state approval caused indeed by an overwhelming necessity. The nineteenth century, thus saw, the instruction of immigrant children in a multiplicity of languages as diverse as Italian, Polish, and Cherokee.

However, German communities were by far the most influential in regards to bilingual schooling in the 1800's. In fact, surveys on students' enrollment at the turn of the twentieth century showed that “at least 600,000 primary school students (public and parochial) were receiving part or all of their instruction in the German language -- about 4% of all American children in the elementary grades” (History of Bilingual Education, NABE analysis).

The years approaching World War I witnessed a radical change in the political condition of the German community. Lack of confidence over non-English speakers in general, but particularly German Americans was the starting point for most states to embrace English-only instruction laws aiming to "Americanize" these groups. By 1923 thirty-four states required English to be the only language of official instruction. However, for some the hysteria over non-English speakers reached the proposal of banning foreign language teaching, although this was held as unconstitutional.

Clearly, war-inflected fear provoked that by the mid-1920s, bilingual instruction was nearly eliminated in the country. The arrival of World War II only strengthened the paranoia over alien distinction, more than ever being American meant speaking English. Therefore, English-only instruction continued to be the norm as immigrants from all over the world kept on arriving to American soil.

3.2.2 Civil rights and The Bilingual Education Act of 1968.

We have already discussed the migration waves of Latinos coming to the United States either searching for a better economic situation or political haven. Most Latinos had families with young children hence Bilingual Education rose again as a primordial item on the agenda.

Thomas Weyr states that bilingual education revived as a response to the high drop out rate of those Hispanic youths. He explains that those children were placed into English-only classes, forbidden to speak Spanish, and expected to learn English on a sink-or-swim basis. Most children did sink (51).

Bilingual Education for the Spanish-speaking peoples residing in the country had certainly struggled to be sanctioned. The civil rights movement of the 1950's, and 1960's

came indeed as the ultimate push for its recognition. Minority cultures had their voices heard as African Americans, Native Americans, Mexican Americans, and Puerto Ricans demanded that their unique cultures be recognized and be equally represented in the school curriculum (Spring, Joel 346).

It was the Cuban community in the early 1960's who insistently sought to establish official English-Spanish bilingual programs in Miami to attend the needs of its young population. Soon after, other communities followed. Although, the Bilingual Education proposal aimed to compile instruction for all non-English speaking children, in its core the program was focused on the Spanish-speaking peoples. In January 2, 1968 President Lyndon Johnson signed Title VII of The Elementary and Secondary Schools Education Act (ESEA) what is commonly known as The Bilingual Education Act.

Nonetheless a great step towards the civil rights movement, the Bilingual Education Act of 1968 is seen as a masterwork of ambiguity since it did not provide a definition of 'bilingual education' and moreover, failed to specify its goals (Weyr 57). The law merely offered to deliver federal funding to encourage local school districts⁶ to incorporate native-language instruction, but it did not compel them to do so.

⁶ A school district is a unique body corporate and politic, usually with standing before the law coequal to that of a city or a county, and has similar powers including taxation and eminent domain. Its legislative body, elected by direct popular vote, is called a school board or board of trustees, and this body appoints a superintendent, usually a highly qualified teacher, to function as the district's chief executive for carrying out day-to-day decisions and policy implementations. The school board on occasion may also exercise a token judiciary function in serious employee or student discipline matters. The functioning of a school district can be a key influence and concern in local politics. A well run district with safe and clean schools, graduating enough students to good colleges, can enhance the value of housing in its area, and thus increase the amount of tax revenue available to carry out its operations (www.wikipedia.com).

As anyone would expect, there was a very slow start among school districts with large population of non-English speaking children, commonly referred to as Limited English Proficiency (LEP) students. However, it was in 1974 that the case *Lau v. Nichols*⁷ put the subject back into the spotlight and school districts were then instructed to take real measures in providing LEP students with a suitable instruction. The United States Congress then endorsed this principle in the Equal Educational Opportunity Act of 1974 constituting a bilingual education program in very broad conditions.

“A program of instruction, designed for children of limited English-speaking ability in elementary or secondary schools, in which, with respect to the years of study to which such program is applicable –there is instruction given in and study of, English and to the extent necessary to allow a child to progress effectively through the educational system, the native language of the children of limited English-speaking ability, and such instruction is given with appreciation of the cultural heritage of such children, and with respect to elementary school instruction, such instruction shall to the extent necessary, be in all courses or subjects of study which will allow a child to progress effectively through the educational system” (cit. in Leibowitz 12).

Neither the Bilingual Education Act nor the *Lau* decision imposed any particular procedures for the instruction of LEP students. As long as school districts had a minimum

⁷ On March 25, 1970 a suit was filed in the Federal District Court on behalf of a student named Kenny Lau as a class action suit against the San Francisco Board of Education/Alan Nichols (as its then superintendent). Plaintiffs alleged that the school district failed to provide bilingual instruction to some 1,800 students of Chinese ancestry and thus denied them a meaningful opportunity to participate in the educational system. The District Court ruled in favor of the school district. The plaintiffs appealed to the United States Circuit Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit. This court affirmed the ruling of the lower court. The plaintiffs then appealed to the United States Supreme Court, which granted certiorari (*Alexander, David and Alfonso Nava 3*).

of 20 LEP students, they could start different approaches for bilingual instruction:

English as a Second Language, structured immersion, or bilingual-bicultural curricula.

3.2.3 Bilingual Education crossfire.

Indeed an enormous task was given to the school districts across the country with heavy involvement from the federal government. In 1975 the Department for Health, Education and Welfare issued a set guidelines entitled “Task Force Findings Specifying Remedies Available for Eliminating Past Educational practices Ruled Unlawful Under *Lau v. Nichols*” commonly known as the “Lau Remedies” which intended to finally provide a structure and content to the incipient bilingual instruction rulings.

Although the best of intentions were set on the “Lau Remedies” they certainly did not end with the controversy over the Bilingual Education programs funding and structuring⁸.

In September 1981 a study entitled “Effectiveness of Bilingual Education: A Review of the Literature” expressing that bilingual classes had real results in Spanish but no significant improvement was seen in English, set the argument again on the efficiency of the programs. By 1982 the “Lau Remedies” had expired, therefore “school districts were no longer bound by the agreements they had reached with the federal government since 1975. They could be revived or amended, and “any effective approach” to teaching English judged acceptable” (Weyr 68).

⁸ “Lau Remedies” give the school district decision makers the guidelines to show what impact the Lau decision has on school district policy making. It includes definitions, clarifications, and requirements on the basic features for constructing a bilingual education program: I. Identification of Student’s Primary Language, II. Diagnostic, III. Educational program selection, IV. Required and elective courses, V. Teacher requirements, VI. Racial/ethnic isolation, VII. Notification to parents, VIII. Evaluation, IX Definition of terms (Alexander and Nava 57).

The opposition to bilingual programs became even more visible in 1983 when the movement “U.S. English” proposed to make English the official language of the country. Additionally, the Reagan administration appointed strong opponents of bilingual instruction to the National Advisory and Coordinating Council on Bilingual Education. The new counselors favored giving more power to local officials to determine programs. “Such policy would undercut the power of the Hispanic community had gained by working with the federal government” (Spring 364). Their political representation still remained very feeble and Hispanics saw with great concern that opposition to bilingual education increased. Nonetheless, the Bilingual Education Act was renewed in 1984 and Congress appropriated \$139 million USD for its continuance (Weyr 69).

The crossfire continued when in 1985 the new Secretary of Education, William Bennett, expressed bluntly his views on bilingual education. He asserted that bilingual education programs had failed by teaching native languages to the exclusion and detriment of English (Escamilla) and by 1988 the federal initiatives decided to encourage the switching to English-only programs for students with limited proficiency in English by directing up to 25% of funds to those programs. In the 1990’s schools districts enjoyed substantial freedom to handle bilingual education programs, as long as they would prove their efficiency, however, several states revised their bilingual education programs and some even decided switch to English-only classes.

3.2.4 Bilingual education classrooms.

Bilingual Education programs are very wide in their scope of action. There are no clear rules, and no path to follow. The birth and development of bilingual education was

nested in the Civil rights movement with nothing but the best intentions, but the goals remained somehow unclear since politics got on the way.

According to Stephen Krashen “We need to distinguish two distinct goals of bilingual education. The first is the development of academic English and academic success, the second is the development of the heritage language” (Ninety Questions). Patricia Gandara goes even further and includes as a third goal the fostering of positive intercultural relations (339). Regardless of defined and delimited goals, the reality is that bilingual education took over the classrooms where LEP students were guided in an environment familiar to them. But how is this achieved in the day-to-day school program? How do Bilingual education programs work?

Schools districts do exert their freedom on the implementation for bilingual education programs. However, there are four general approaches on the instruction of LEP students. Sometimes a bilingual program classroom management uses more than one strategy if deemed necessary.

1. Primary language instruction. Students take academic subjects such as math and history mostly in their first language, with textbooks and classroom materials in that language and in English.
2. Specially designed English instruction with primary language support. English is mostly used in the classroom, but some of it is in the students’ native language. There is a certain degree of assistance from bilingual teachers or aides either within a classroom or in pull-out classes during the school day or week. The main goal of this teaching category is to help students develop skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing English while learning academic content.

3. Sheltered immersion. LEP students who need to learn English are in regular English-language classes with instruction set according to their proficiency. They receive English Language Development classes (also known as English as a Second Language –ESL-), but primary language support is not included.

4. Full Immersion. LEP students are completely immersed in English-language classrooms (often called “sink or swim”). Sometimes LEP students have been withdrawn from special language assistance by parental request (Backgrounder: Bilingual Education in California).

The principal idea of any of these strategies would be to transfer LEP children into mainstream classes as soon as possible, though this process really depends on the child’s own pace and performance. Thus, some children might spend several years in language-assistance curricula.

3.3 Advocating for Bilingual Education.

Even though bilingual education is comprehensive of all LEP students, surely history reflects that the provisions were basically tailored to suit the Hispanic community under the blanket of the civil rights frenzy.

James Crawford,⁹ one of the most enthusiastic supporters and researchers on bilingual education, establishes right from the start that bilingual education is counterintuitive. He asserts that the erroneous assumption that bilingual education means to go easy on LEP students and that they would be better off in total immersion

⁹ James Crawford is currently the Executive Director of the National Association of Bilingual Education.

programs, are decisively the greatest challenges for the recognition of bilingual education (Does Bilingual Ed work?)

Bilingual Education confronts two major claims: linguistic underachievement due to bilingual hindrances, and the weak assimilation occurrence.

In regards to the former, for quite sometime the folk psychology of language learning, gave bilingualism the reputation for making children slower at learning, amusingly indicates Barbara Zurer Pearson (309) when in fact, “native-language instruction helps making English comprehensible, by providing contextual knowledge that helps in understanding” (Crawford, Issues in U.S. Language policy).

Language skills provide a window to knowledge. However, it is quite different that a child is capable of speaking a language and that he or she is able to use academically that language and actually reads. Several researchers have concluded on this issue, but Stephen Krashen surely puts it very clearly:

“Developing literacy in the first language is a shortcut to English literacy. A simple three-step argument explains why:
1) We learn to read by understanding what is on the page.
2) If (1) is true, it is easier to learn to read if you understand the language.
3) Once you can read, you can read. When you are literate in one language, it is much easier to develop literacy in another. Literacy transfers across languages” (Ninety Questions, Bilingual Education Works)

On the same subject, language researcher Jim Cummins points out that indeed immigrant students quickly acquire conversational fluency in the second language, however, it does take longer, up to five years (could be more) for LEP students to catch up to native speakers in the academic phase of the language (cit in Dicker, S.J.).

Thomas Weyr points out that since much of the debate is emotional, it goes beyond factual data about what children learn and do not learn. But to Weyr one of the greatest advantages of bilingual education is that “it has the potential for reducing the high drop out rate since most children are more likely to stay in school if classes are conducted in a language they understand” (71).

The other potent claim against bilingual education goes far beyond the empirical tests on language efficiency and academic performance and that is, the assimilation issue. Children can learn better (and more easily) to read and write a second language if they have built confidence in themselves by having become literate first in their native language according to Theodore Andersson (100). Language is part of peoples’ identity and much of the talk on the pros of bilingual education is the consolidation of children’s self esteem and cultural identity. Bilingual education tries to put an end to the patronizing sense of “subtractive schooling” which only leads to the overwhelming obsession to learn English as quickly as possible to the detriment of essential subject matter learning (Moll, Luis and Richard Ruiz 365).

Advocates for Bilingual Education recognize its many flaws regarding its implementation in U.S. schools. Bruce Gaarder highlights seven major obstacles for an effective bilingual instruction in the United States (155-156) which could explain the popular impression of wrongness in the nature of bilingual education per se.

1. The pervasive ethnocentrism of the English mother tongue majority and the corresponding traditional view among schools people that folk bilingualism is a handicap to be overcome rather than an asset to be encouraged.
2. The linkage of bilingual-bicultural education with integration, which gives unreasonable importance to placing English monolingual and other-language

- children together thus making it impossible to use that other language fully and exclusively as the medium during those parts of the school day devoted to it.
3. The high incidence of near illiteracy in Spanish among its speakers their consequent inattention and unconcern for the prestigious uses of Spanish.
 4. A widespread notion that bilingual education is any kind of school activity whatsoever
 5. The common use of a single bilingual person to teach through both languages, instead of pair of each language speakers.
 6. Lack of teachers adequately trained and of institutions prepared to train such teachers.
 7. Misunderstanding and contention over dialectical differences.

Stephen Krashen is convinced that bilingual education works¹⁰ though he agrees that the greatest difficulties in succeeding are the lack of prepared teachers for the task and materials accordingly. Cummins goes further and stresses that the reasons why “some groups of culturally diverse students experience long term persistent

¹⁰ Krashen supports his views in research done by:

- Appel, R. 1988. The language education of immigrant workers' children in The Netherlands. In T. Skutnabb-Kangas and J. Cummins (Eds.) *Minority Education: From Shame to Struggle*. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters. pp. 57-78.
- De la Garza, J. and Medina, M. 1985. Academic achievement as influenced by bilingual instruction for Spanish-dominant Mexican-American children. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*. 7(3): 247-259.
- Greene, J. 1997. A meta-analysis of the Rossell and Baker review of bilingual education research. *Bilingual Research Journal*. 21(2,3): 103-122. Quote "... efforts to eliminate ..." is on page 115.
- Gonzales, L. Antonio. 1989. Native language education: The key to English literacy skills. In D. Bixler-Marquez, J. Ornstein-Galacia, and G. Green (eds.), *Mexican-American Spanish in its societal and cultural contexts*. Rio Grande Series in Languages and Linguistics 3. Brownsville, Texas: University of Texas, Pan American. pp. 209-224.
- Mortensen, E. 1984. Reading achievement of native Spanish-speaking elementary students in bilingual vs. monolingual programs. *Bilingual Review* 11(3): 31-36.
- Ramirez, J., Yuen, D., Ramey, D. and Pasta, D. 1991. Longitudinal study of structured English immersion strategy, early-exit and late-exit bilingual education programs for language-minority students (Final Report, Vols. 1 and 2). San Mateo, CA: Aguirre International. (ERIC Document ED 330 216)

underachievement have much more to do with issues of status and power than with linguistic factors in isolation” (cit. in Dicker 61). Although, research had been conducted in regards to benefits of bilingual education most people oppose it claiming other faults. To Ana Celia Zentella the actual root of the problem for the detractors of bilingual education lies in an inability to accept an expanded definition of an American (cit. in Oboler 97).

3.4 Opposing Bilingual Education.

Despite possible theoretical benefits posited by bilingual education, these programs are not effective in practice sustain professors Marco Hugo Lopez and Marie T. Mora. Much of this conviction arises because many teachers do not receive appropriate training for instructing LEP students, some students are not even taking the language of their heritage (e.g. Chinese students placed in Spanish programs) but most importantly, the placement of recent immigrants into advanced bilingual education classes with students in the same age group may delay the English progress of the other children because teachers must revert back to a strong usage of the minority language to accommodate the new students. (4)

Lopez and Mora’s assertion and others¹¹ on the failure of bilingual education in United States classrooms is based on tangible data taken from real schools’ experiences, however there are several opponents of bilingual instruction in the United States that

¹¹ Christine Rossell and Keith Baker published in 1996 a review of research studies on the effectiveness of bilingual education and they are frequently cited by opponents of bilingual education. For a confrontation of their findings with bilingual education advocates see: Jim Cummins “Rossell and Baker: Their Case for the Effectiveness of Bilingual Education”.

have stronger demands related to a possible threat to United States society's integrity.

Their most important claims are that:

1. Bilingual education sustains segregation in United States' schools. David Gersten from the Center for Equal Opportunity, claims that bilingual education only promotes the segregation of ethnic minority children and that bilingual education has created a linguistic ghetto within the United States school system (Bilingual Education or 'Linguistic Ghetto'?).
2. The real focus of bilingual education current programs is not the acquisition of English and the later transition to mainstream classes. In fact, the lingering of bilingual education searches, in the particular case of Latinos, for the empowerment of that ethnic group. Peter Duignan points out that the debate over bilingual education has strokes of ethnic politics, that it comes down to "Latino power, ethnic pride, so-called victimhood, and preferential treatment through affirmative action" (Bilingual Education: A critique). Rosalie Pedalino Porter agrees and even considers that there is a Bilingual Education Establishment which holds on to the status quo of bilingual education programs regardless of its efficiency (cit in Elaine Levine 145).
3. Bilingual education programs are not well developed and take too many years for students to actually become proficient in English, their main goal. Additionally, the economic cost is enormous according to English First, one of the many organizations searching to make English the official language of the United States.

Table 3.2 Federal Government Spending on Bilingual Education: 1974-2001
(amounts in USD)

1974	50 million
1975	93 million
1976	51 million
1977	115 million
1978	135 million
1979	149 million
1980	166 million
1981	160 million
1982	110 million
1983	108 million
1984	112 million
1985	111 million
1986	98 million
1987	103 million
1988	130 million
1989	132 million
1990	152 million
1991	148 million
1992	160 million
1993	101 million
1994	176 million
1995	189 million
1996	160 million
1997	171 million
1998	204 million
1999	284 million
2000	319 million
2001	370 million (estimated)

Source: “Total Outlays for Grants to State and Local Governments by Function, Agency and Program: 1940-2006” (table 12.3), Historical tables, Budget of the United States Government, Fiscal year 2002, U.S. Government Printing Office, 2001 (cit. in <http://www.englishfirst.org>)

4. The weak integration and assimilation of students into the mainstream society debilitates the cohesion needed in a country so ethnically diverse, creating thus a

- possibility for “Quebecation” of the American society. Mauro E. Mujica, chairman and CEO of U.S. English Inc, argues that multilingual societies suffer severe constitutional crisis. Mujica warns the United States society over the dangers of official usage of more than one language using the example of Canada, where official multilingualism policy has led to disunity, resentment and near-secession (Why the U.S. Needs an Official Language).
5. Bilingual Education neglects the preponderance of English. Being the United States society so diverse in ethnic groups, English remains as the primordial cohesive; neglecting it, jeopardizes the stability of the nation ponders Arthur Schlesinger (The disuniting of America). Duignan further reflects that the intrinsic criticism that bilingual education has over the melting-pot theory, came to interrupt the process of ending ethnic divisions and achieving intermarriage in America (Bilingual Education. A Critique).
 6. It is physically dangerous not to speak English in the United States warns Mauro Mujica. Fatal accidents come from language confusions that could be prevented with a unifying official language as opposed to multilingualism. (Why the U.S.)

Critics of bilingual education embrace any of the alternative measures for the transition of LEP students into mainstream English classes. Approaches such as the sink-or-swim or English as a Second Language (ESL) are encouraged so children will then be able to share the schooling experience like any of the other fortunate American children.

Chapter number four will examine the particular case of bilingual education in California where the outcome of intense years of applying bilingual instruction and the

reverse measure taken with proposition 227 provides reliable evidence on the current condition of bilingual education in the United States and its impact on the Latino community.