NCLR

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF LA RAZA
Office of Research, Advocacy, and Legislation

Perspectivas Públicas

Backgrounders

Number: Fifteen

Date: November 30, 1981

Title: Short Answers to Common Questions about Bilingual Education

Contact: Dr. Josue Gonzalez, Ms. Lori Orum

Few educational programs have been as persistently clouded by misperceptions, biased media coverage and lack of public understanding as has bilingual education. This educational approach, designed to improve both the English proficiency and the general educational attainment of limited English proficient children has been bombarded by criticism throughout most of its young existence. Some problems have resulted from lack of adequate information, others, unfortunately, from the lingering effects of racism and ethnocentrism in our society.

This article addresses only the resistance and objections born out of the lack of information. The types of questions answered here are the sort often asked by people who are sincerely puzzled and genuinely want to know. These questions include:

- What is bilingual education and why is it so important to Hispanics?
- Other immigrant groups of the past did not need bilingual education, why do we need it now?
- Why not concentrate on English by using it as the exclusive language of instruction?
- Why didn't the Supreme Court require bilingual education?
- Doesn't the use of the home language in school become a crutch that can slow down children's transition into English?
- Why does bilingual education also have to be bicultural? Why the schools have to teach anything other than the mainstream American culture?
- Isn't there a greater degree of segregation in bilingual education than in monolingual education because of the language grouping practices that are used?
- Why is the research evidence on the effectiveness of bilingual education so inconclusive?
- Quebec has had major problems with bilingualism. Isn't bilingual education going to create the same problems here?

SHORT ANSWERS TO COMMON QUESTIONS ABOUT BILINGUAL EDUCATION

Few programs that serve minority children are as poorly understood as bilingual education. So stubborn is the resistance to this concept that it has now permeated the press and other popular media to a degree that baffles many observers. The reasons for this lack of understanding and support for programs of bilingual education are very complex. Some are deeply rooted in history and tradition, in habits of thought that are difficult for the society to break. This is particularly true at a time when problems of energy, employment, and the economy are creating such widespread feelings of frustration and dependence. Other reasons can be traced directly to the lingering effects of racism and ethno-centrism. In the minds of some Americans, bilingual education is a symbol of a changing demographic scenario that is still poorly understood and which harbors many uncertainties for the future of the country.

This article addresses only one of the many reasons that currently exist for the misunderstandings and confusion about bilingual education; we are concerned here with resistance and objections born out of the lack of information. The questions that we attempt to answer here have one thing in common: they are the type of questions that are often asked by people who are sincerely puzzled and who genuinely wish to know. The article does not pretend to be effective in convincing the hard-nosed skeptic or those who argue against

bilingual education for reasons other than lack of information. That task is, of course, no less important, but it is too complicated to be accomplished in a short treatment of this type.1

What exactly is bilingual education and why is it so important to Hispanics?

Simply defined, bilingual education is the use of two languages, one of which is English, as means of instruction. As we know it in the U.S., it is an educational tool primarily utilized with children of limited English proficiency to provide them both English language instruction and access to the other content areas of the curriculum. A structured English as a Second Language (ESL) component is always an important part of any bilingual program since full English fluency and literacy are important program goals. The native language of the child is used in bilingual programs to the extent necessary to teach basic skills and ensure that children do not fall behind their peers in other subjects while they learn English.

Educators have known for years that children who do not understand the language of instruction have difficulty in succeeding in English

1Josue M. Gonzalez, currently Visiting Fellow at the Center for Research and Advanced Studies at George Mason University, was Director of the Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs in the U.S. Department of Education from 1978 to 1981. This article is based on a project of the National Origin Desegregation Assistance Centers in Texas and Wisconsin. The Intercultural Development Research Association and the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, sponsors of the centers, gave permission for the use of this material. Ms. Lori Orum, Policy Analyst at NCLR assisted in the preparation of this article.

monolingual schools. Federal and state courts have also recognized this fact. Language minority children have tended to fall so far behind their peers in subject matter mastery that, even after a degree of English proficiency, they never catch up. Disproportionate numbers of these children are retained rather than promoted and their drop-out rate is much higher than that of the rest of the population. Traditional, monolingual sink-or-swim approaches to dealing with the limited English proficient child have failed.

It is estimated that there are 2.5 to three million children of limited English proficiency in the United States. Of those children, over 70 percent are Hispanic. Since four of five Hispanic children come from households where Spanish is spoken, the importance of English language difficulties among Hispanic students must not be under-estimated. Deficiencies in speaking and reading English, or lack of any English ability at all have disastrous affects on the education of these children. They affect all content areas and have retarded the academic progress of Hispanic students whose achievement decreases with each grade. So total has been the failure of traditional public school programs for Hispanics that Hispanics are often described as the most under-educated group of Americans. Hispanic children are more likely than majority group children to be retained and enrolled below grade level. Enrollment below grade level causes a variety of problems and embarassments and many of these students no doubt drop out of school as soon as the law allows. The drop-out rate for Hispanics is much higher than for the majority, English-speaking population. As of 1979, only 42.3 percent of Hispanics 25 years old and over had completed four

years of high school as compared with 70.3 percent of the majority population. Hispanic youth aged 14 to 19 were twice as likely as "whites" not to have completed high school. This pervasive under-education obviously affects the employment and earning potential of Hispanics.

There are a variety of models of bilingual education. Federal involvement with bilingual education, however, is based solely on the model of Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE). This model utilizes native language instruction only to the extent necessary and only until the child is proficient enough in English to eliminate native language instruction entirely. The Transitional Bilingual Education model recognizes that the native language is a tool which may be utilized both in the teaching of English and content curricula. The use of that tool is discontinued as soon as the child reaches a determined level of proficiency in English and all further instruction is conducted only in English.

Although the specific method of delivery of services may vary, bilingual programs have the following elements in common:

- The goal of English language proficiency and content mastery;
- A strong English as a Second Language Component;
- Use of two languages within the classroom as media of instruction;
- Use of the native language to teach content until the child is ready to effectively progress using only English;
- Books and materials in English and the native language; and
- Bilingual personnel spending some portion of the day with the child.

Those programs which fail to stimulate the cognitive development of students and allow them to fall behind academically are the least successful. One can learn English and still fall behind in the content areas. Instruction in the content areas is vital to help limited English proficient children succeed, and native language instruction is the key which can open this opportunity for children while they go about the business of learning English. Limited progress in the regular curriculum can lead to permanent academic retardation which cannot be overcome even when students become proficient in English.

In summary, bilingual programs use two languages to teach English and the content areas to students of limited English proficiency. The native language is used to provide instruction only until the student is proficient in English. These types of programs provide limited English proficient children, the overwhelming majority Hispanic, with a better chance to learn than do traditional English-only approaches. The low educational attainment of Hispanics provides an eloquent testimony to the bankruptcy of a sink-or-swim approach and the need for programs like bilingual education which open the doors of educational opportunity.

Other immigrant groups of the past did not need bilingual education. Why do we need it now?

Early immigrants to the United States did not have much schooling, either in their countries or after they got here. Education then played a different role in preparing students for the labor market. They were able to survive, and sometimes even to prosper, because the

economy of their time allowed it. In the pre-industrial and early economies of yester-year, it was possible to find work that did not require formal education. For most of its young life, the United States has held opportunities that were based on sweat equity and pure muscle power. Construction, farming, railroads, factories, etc., were the prime sources of employment for early immigrants.

But even in the past decades it was not the first generation that achieved full participation in American life. Often, the new arrivals spent their own lives without any schooling at all; their children completed elementary school and perhaps their grandchildren attended high school. This progressive phasing-in to formal education over three generations was accompanied by a comparable increase in the people's ability to use the English language.

All that has now changed. The multitude of previously existing jobs which could be done without knowing English no longer exist to the same degree. In the last quarter century, a dramatic change has occurred in the economy. There is hardly any work at all now for the unschooled and for those who do not speak English. The economy has changed from what economists call "labor intensive" to one that is "capital intensive". It is no longer possible to survive comfortably -- much less proper -- without having one of two things: financial capital to invest in business or some sort of "negotiable capital" such as diplomas, degrees, licenses, or other credentials. The acquisition of credentials requires formal schooling and an ability to use the spoken and written English language well.

What this means is that families no longer have three generations

in which to enter the mainstream. It must all be accomplished in one lifespan for the family to remain economically independent. This is in turn argues for the most effective and efficient system of public education possible. Simple literacy will not suffice in today's labor market. A high school diploma is the bare minimum for most jobs in the modern job market, and is an essential prerequisite for attending college and specialized schools which increase earning potential.

Bilingual education is one efficient and effective component part of a school program. In a sense, it is an attempt to help shorten the longer acculturation period that past generations had available to them.

It is important to remember also that, in the past, education was not available to all in America. A certain level of economic comfort was essential before children could afford the "luxury" of being present in school and out of the work force. As a consequence, only middle and upper class youngsters had the benefit of formal schooling. This situation has now changed dramatically. Child labor laws and compulsory school attendance laws help assure that most children will be in school rather than in the work force at least until mid-adolescence. This also means that a broader range of youngsters -- socially, economically and culturally -- are now in public schools.

The end result is that the schools must learn to serve a more heterogeneous population. This variety in the school population includes not only those who are non-English speakers; it also includes those that are physically and mentally impaired and those with learning disabilities. The challenges that these groups present to the

educational system are formidable. These challenges determine in part the specifications for the new role that schools must play in an egalitarian society. In short, the clientele and function of schools are different now from what they used to be. This is not due as much to new demands by immigrants or minority groups as to the changes in society. To the degree that minorities ask more of the schools it is because society now asks more of them.

Why not concentrate on learning English by using it as the exclusive language of instruction?

High Intensity Language Training (HILT) Programs are at times acceptable methods of language learning, but they are most appropriate for adult learners. This is not the best method to use for teaching children. Highly motivated adults can be expected to devote long hours to learning a task. They can also be expected to bring a high level of self-motivation and sheer will-power to the job of learning a language.

Children, on the other hand, are different in several respects:

1) Their attention span is much, much shorter. This has nothing to do with motivation or will-power but is simply a function of age. Research has demonstrated that no matter how interesting the task, children can only concentrate and learn during short spans of time. This seems to be a natural phenomenon; it is an intrinsic part of being a child and not having yet matured as a learner. After the learning switch clicks off -- and that can occur after only 15 or 20 minutes in the early grades -- little or no learning takes place on that task. If teachers were to spend long periods of time concentrated

only on teaching the structure of the target language -- as in high intensity programs -- much of the school day would be wasted. By switching to other subjects or activities, however, a child's attention span and the learning process can be re-engaged.

2) In most cases, children have to learn many other things besides language. Even those children who might be able to concentrate for a longer time on learning English simply could not afford to do so at the expense of their other subjects. If they are to keep up with their classmates on other subjects, they must devote part of their school time to studying other subject matters. Math, sciences, social studies, etc., cannot be neglected. If schools were to postpone teaching those subjects while they teach only English, some children would lag far behind their classmates in their other work. Eventually this makes them become over-aged for their classes, which increases their discomfort and frustration. As the content subjects escalate in difficulty, many children who cannot keep up will simply give up and drop out of school. Even those that remain in school are usually placed in slower classrooms where they will not slow down their English-speaking peers. Often these classrooms are comprised of all National Origin Minority (NOM) children and it could become illegal segregation. In this area, an ounce of prevention to keep children enrolled in school is much more desirable and cost-effective than a pound of cure.

The idea that children should be expected to learn English before they learn anything else has been dealt with by the highest court in the land. In the Lau v. Nichols decision, the U.S. Supreme Court

essentially outlawed this approach. In an unanimous decision, the High Court ruled that to require a prior knowledge of English "before a child can effectively participate in the educational program...is to make a mockery of public education." In other words, schools cannot expect students to learn English before they can learn other subjects; they must teach the English language and subject content at the same time.

The Supreme Court stopped short of requiring bilingual education but did say what the schools cannot do. In this the Court was quite explicit:

> ". . . there is no equality of treatment merely by providing students with the same facilities, textbooks, teachers and curriculum; for students who do not understand English are effectively foreclosed from any meaningful education."

Although the Supreme Court did not prescribe bilingual education by name, there is little question that the specifications it set out are best met by that approach.

Why didn't the Supreme Court require bilingual education?

While it is technically correct that it did not prescribe this educational approach, it is important to understand why. In American jurisprudence the courts refrain from giving "advisory opinions." It is a legal principle which in effect means that before a court can order a specific solution to a problem, it must first be asked to do so. In Lau, there was no request by the plaintiffs for any specific kind of remedy. The question posed to the court was whether the schools had any particular (and differentiated) responsibilities towards non-English-speaking children. This was an important question

because up to that time, the courts had ordered schools to give all children the same type of instructional program. This doctrine arose from desegregation cases and was meant to eradicate the dual systems that had existed in segregated schools. The question of equal educational opportunity now had to be addressed by the courts again, this time taking into account what happens when the schools speak one language and the students another. In the Lau case, the Court ruled that unlawful discrimination can and does occur when schools treat children the same way when their learner characteristics are in fact quite different, and therefore educationally relevant. But the Court noted that a "remedy is not urged upon us" and they followed the judicial tradition of not volunteering an answer for a question that had not been asked.

The net effect is that although the High Court did not prescribe bilingual instruction, the basic elements of its decision seem to point in that direction. In summary, the court said that:

1) Schools must teach non-English-speaking children in a different way;

2) They cannot expect children to learn English before they can learn other subjects;

3) They must use teachers, textbooks and curricula that are different from those of other students and more suited to their language needs.

Bilingual education clearly meets all of these requirements. In many other legal cases where bilingual instruction has been asked of the courts, they have not hesitate to approve it. This has happened in New York, New Mexico, Texas, and several other states. In addition, the laws of many states now require some form of bilingual education. At

present nearly 20 states have this requirement in at least the elementary school level.

Doesn't the use of the home language in school become a crutch that can slow down children's transition into English?

At certain stages of development, children can form habits which become their preferred manner of acting, speaking, thinking or otherwise behaving. This is normal and very much in the nature of being human. But when a habit is also a skill -- particularly one that brings with it many rewards -- it can never become a crutch. Most often it is an exciting springboard to new discoveries in learning. The use of the home language in school in a carefully structured program of bilingual education presents such opportunities for growth and continued academic development. There are several reasons for this.

First, the home language of the child is used for only a part of the school day. English is used the rest of the time and it is used more and more as the child moves up in the grades. Thus if any language becomes a habit, it will be English, since over the years, it is used much more in learning situations. It is also the language that is most reinforced outside the classroom. Under these circumstances, the use of a child's native language is just one more school experience comparable to concentrating on math, science, social studies, Physical Education (P.E.), or any other subject during the school day. There is little danger for example, that spending an hour a day on a spelling lesson will lead children to want to do nothing else. They may like it and enjoy it more than say, math, but as the "managers" of the

curriculum, teachers make sure that both sets of skills receive due attention. The same is true of other academic subjects. If a child finds, for instance, that poetry is more enjoyable than prose, it may affect his/her selection of reading material for a period of time. But the trained teacher of English literature can make prose reading enjoyable and rewarding too. With a teacher's guidance, the child acquires the proper balance in exposure and in skill development in both languages.

It is important to remember that the use of the home language in bilingual instruction is not done haphazardly; there is much careful planning by the teacher and other school personnel who are responsible for the overall design of the curriculum. The home language is used for particular purposes. Its utilization is planned to assure maximum acscess to the other school subjects. The home language opens up an opportunity for a better interaction between Limited English Proficient (LEP) children and the curriculum. It is a bridge and should a child linger on it too long, the teacher will nudge him gently along. Luckily for the teacher, this is not very difficult to do. One of the most wonderful characteristics of childhood is the built-in inquisitiveness that makes our profession so rewarding. Children enjoy the challenge of moving on from what they already know to explore and discover lesser known phenomena. This occurs in language development at least to the same degree as it does in science and other subjects. By using the home language for part of the day, bilingual education helps the child to develop a secure base of skills that have already proven themselves useful to the child. They are behaviors and learning

tools that give a feeling of security because they have been mastered and can be used to question, analyze, categorize, extrapolate, etc. From this base of learning skills the challenge of learning another language becomes not only easier but more rewarding and pleasureable.

When children do not speak English and are not involved in bilingual education, a double-bind situation exists. They cannot interact with the teacher in the language they already know, and they are not yet able to do so in the language of the school. This deprives them of a secure base that lets them venture out to learn less known facts or skills. There are two doors through which these children can enter the world of learning, but one of them is temporarily closed until English is learned. Bilingual education uses the open door while working diligently to unlock the other.

The rationale for bilingual education seems sound enough, but why does it also have to be bicultural? Why do the schools have to teach anything other than the mainstream American culture?

Most people would agree that one of the functions of formal schooling is to transmit the core culture of a society from one generation to the next. This would happen whether or not educators planned for it, because no curriculum is culture-free. In fact, the reverse is true: culture is very much part of curriculum. The values, mores, preferences, and biases of a society are invariably found in the curriculum of its schools. This occurs sometimes by design and sometimes inadvertently. Most often, schools and teachers are not even aware of this dimension of schooling; they take it for granted because

it is so much a part of their own value and perception systems. Most of us barely notice this cultural imprint unless it is brought to our attention.

There are of course, many different definitions of culture, and that complicates the picture in a short discussion of this type. For our purposes here, we can adopt the generalized working definition of culture that was proposed by the anthropologist who suggested that:

> "Culture is a set of [group] standards for deciding what is, what should be, what to do about it, and how to go about doing it."

This particular definition is a good one for looking at what happens in American schools regarding the teaching of history, a central subject to the notion of culture because it is the collective "group memory" of the citizenry. It is not uncommon in U.S. schools to teach Black children that Thomas Jefferson is an American hero even though he owned slaves. We also teach Indian children that George Washington is the "father of our country" and that Columbus "discovered America." A curriculum that is culturally sensitive, i.e., bicultural or multi-cultural recognizes these inconsistencies and their potential interpretation by minority-group children. Once we recognize that some of these representations are not acceptable to all groups, we can balance-out the curricular content to make it more sensitive to the place of other cultural groups in U.S. history. The end result is a curriculum (and a process for analyzing it) that makes the school more aware of the values and hidden messages that are inherent in its formulation of history. Doing this does not inpugn the character of historic figures or diminish their importance to the country in any

way. It does require us to acknowledge more openly that Blacks, Chicanos, Indians, Eskimos, Puerto Ricans, Chamorros (in Guam), Aleuts (in Alaska), and native Hawaiians -- along with many other groups -- are all Americans. To teach about their heritage and perceptions of history is simply to teach more of the component parts of American culture rather than being so selective.

Bilingual-bicultural education has served to remind us that Americans are not homogeneous; Americans are clusters of people whose views, and perceptions are all equally valid. This is important to the children who belong to ethno-linguistic groups. It gives them a feeling of belonging to the central culture rather than being marginal observers. It is also important to the children who do <u>not</u> belong to such groups because it teaches them a more balanced and democratic perspective about their history and the collective heritage of the society in which they live.

Minority-group taxpayers help pay for the costs of schooling. This is another reason why their respective cultures and heritage are as "eligible" for inclusion in the curriculum as are the cultures of other groups. The basic premise to keep in mind is that it is not the role of schools to <u>screen-out</u> the culture of any American.

Bilingual-bicultural education is culturally democratic education. It is also an additive rather than a substractive concept. Its functions are to fill in the empty parts, tell all sides to a story and bring in minority group aspects that have been by-passed by history, anthropology, sociology and the humanities. By so doing, it demeans no one, enriches everyone, and makes no judgements as to which cultures

are not worthy enough to be included in the curriculum.

Isn't there a greater danger of segregation in bilingual education than in monolingual education because of the language grouping practices that are used?

Racial/ethnic segregation is a complicated concept, but essentially it relates to the separation of children on the basis of factors that are not relevant educationally to such separation. Thus, when children are assigned to separate schools or classrooms simply because they are Black, this constitutes illegal segregation because "blackness" per se is an educationally irrelevant characteristic. Language minority children can also be segregated when they are separated from other children solely on the basis of their ethnicity or skin color. It is possible, however, to group children for instruction where such grouping is based on particular learner characteristics and therefore improve learning opportunities in the school. Civil rights terminology uses the term National Origin Minority (NOM) to refer to factors that are not learning-related, while the term Limited English Proficiency refers to the specific factors that have to do with language characteristics.

Bilingual education does not, however, require that LEP children be separated from the majority-group peers for long periods of time; often it does not require it at all. The United States Congress recognized this in Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. In that statute, the Congress specified that Title VII projects should work with LEP children in the schools which "they

normally attend." This provision prevents the movement of LEP children to separate facilities for the purpose of operating a bilingual education program. Title VII also states that "in such courses of study as art, music, and physical education, a program of bilingual education shall make provision for the participation of children of limited English proficiency in regular classes."

Another important provision of Title VII that relates to this issue states in part:

> In order to prevent the segregation of children on the basis of national origin in programs assisted under this title, and in order to broaden the understanding of children about languages and cultural heritage other than their own, a program of bilingual instruction may include the participation of children whose language is English.
>
> . . . The objective of the program shall be to assist children of limited English proficiency to improve their English language skills, and the participation of other children in the program must be for the principal purpose of contributing to the achievement of that objective.

This legislation thus provides good guidance for guarding against inadvertent segregation in bilingual education programs. In short:

1) The program is to be conducted in the same schools where the LEP children would normally be if there were no bilingual education program in existence;

2) In classes where English language skills are less important (art, music, P.E., etc.) LEP children are not to be separated from their English-speaking peers;

3) Since children also learn language from each other, the presence of native English speakers in bilingual education classrooms is a way of improving opportunities for this to occur.

To be fully understood, the issues of segregation of LEP and/or NOM children must be viewed within the broader context of <u>discrimination</u> in school programs. The end result of discrimination is the denial of

equal educational opportunities. The effect on children is the same whether this denial occurs through action or lack of action on the part of the schools.

In the case of LEP children, this concept extends beyond the problems that arise purely as a result of pupil assignment practices. As we have already pointed out, a person's race, sex or religion are educationally irrelevant characteristics. Language, on the other hand, is an educationally relevant characteristic since language is the primary vehicle for interaction between schools and pupils. Without understanding the language of instruction, meaningful learning cannot occur at all. Thus race, sex and religious discrimination occur when school officials treat individuals differently. Language-based discrimination occurs when schools treat LEP children in the same manner as they treat native speakers of English.

The chief implication of this is that the remedy for language discrimination must also be very different from the remedy for other sorts of discrimination. That is why the matter of segregation within bilingual education must be viewed within a broader matrix of factors. To alleviate racial, religious and gender discrimination, school officials must reform their policies and procedures to eliminate consideration of educationally irrelevant student characteristics. In most cases they do not need to establish new educational programs for minorities and women, but rather must ensure that minorities and women have access to and participate in the educational programs generally offered. To alleviate a language discrimination violation, however, school officials must adjust their policies and procedures to take into

account an educationally-relevant student characteristic; e.g.,the language-skill needs for the non-English-speaking students. In most cases, this means that school officials need to establish a special educational program for language minority students to remedy the linguistic barrier that prevents effective teaching and learning from occurring.

Why is the research evidence on the effectiveness of bilingual education so inconclusive? We seem not to know for sure whether bilingual education really "works."

There are several reasons for the seeming inconsistencies in research evidence showing the effectiveness of bilingual education. Most of them have more to do with the state-of-the-art in research methodology than with the quality of bilingual education itself.

For a number of complex reasons, educational evaluation practices rely heavily on methods and practices borrowed from experimental research. But bilingual education as we currently know it is more of a general concept than it is an uniform variable of the type that is examined in most contemporary research. It is an educational approach generally speaking, not a curriculum "treatment" of the sort that most experimental research can evaluate using current methods and procedures. Lack of relevant procedures explains why many programs cannot be properly evaluated using pre- and post-test measures of student achievement. Many of these "programs" do not have the tight controls (e.g., level and quality of implementation) that permit this type of analysis. We are not able to say whether bilingual education

"works." That question must be broken down into much smaller segments to make it susceptible to analysis and a valid answer. A better set of questions would be: what kinds of bilingual education work best, with what kinds of students, under what conditions, and with what resources? In short, we must ask the same type of questions about bilingual education as we ask about monolingual education. Within bilingual education, research of this type is in its early stages and conclusive answers are not yet available. This new approach to research has come along years later than it should have. The delay was, in part, due to an early preoccupation with research that tried to determine whether bilingual education was worth trying at all. This last question is, of course, not answerable through scientific research. It is a question of values, attitudes, and public policy judgements. Information and data from many different sources go into making a decision of this type; research contributes only some of the insights that are needed.

The federal government has now begun to frame its research and evaluation agenda in a more realistic way. Over the next few years, data and findings from this new approach to education will shed considerable light on the features that contribute to high quality programs of bilingual education.

A second reason why bilingual education programs do not always show positive gains in student achievement -- a common way of measuring program impact -- is that the students who participate in these programs often have many other serious problems that contribute to retard academic growth. Federal funds (Title VII for example) are targeted to serve children who are "most in need" of bilingual education, using both linguistic and socio-economic criteria. These

are the children who are least likely to show rapid growth and improvement. Because of the complexity of their needs, they often require longer periods of time to derive the full benefit from programs of remedial compensatory education. Measured against the traditional expectations (e.g., one month's growth for one month of instruction) programs that serve these populations can appear to be failing. In reality they may be quite successful in slowing down (or stopping) the "cumulative deficit" phenomenon which is necessary before positive gains can be seen. This type of "progress" is exceedingly valuable but it is not easily detected.

A close corrollary of this problem is that past efforts at evaluating bilingual education programs have not been fully successful in factoring out other variables that affect rates of progress of LEP children in school. Many LEP children suffer the detrimental effects of poverty in addition to the effects of language incompatibility in their schoolwork. The degree to which <u>each set</u> of factors is responsible for impeding learning is difficult to sort out. Both are clearly important but current evaluation practices do not differentiate between the effects of each. This problem is also being addressed in on-going research and important new discoveries are likely to emerge soon.

Another factor contributing to the current difficulties in evaluating bilingual education is that, until very recently, we have known very little about the characteristics of good schools in general, whether bilingual or not. This relates to the settings or context in which bilingual education (or any other innovation), can have the best

chances or success. In recent years, research on good schools and good teachers has improved greatly. Future research on bilingual education will be able to include research evidence on these factors. This will allow researchers and evaluators to account for the variables that affect success more precisely than has been possible in the past. Preliminary research embodying these characteristics is already underway under the auspices of the National Institute of Education. The expectation is that as researchers pinpoint the characteristics of good schools and good teachers, they will also be able to identify good bilingual schools and good bilingual teaching.

A final but thorny problem in bilingual education centers on the importance of the negative socio-political climate that exists in some communities. In those places where bilingual education is clouded by uncertainty, suspicion, and at times even open hostility, it is extremely difficult to conduct evaluations that are fair and valid. It is undeniable that negative social factors influence the way programs operate -- the expectations of teachers and administrators, and the support that school authorities are willing to provide. It may well be that in some schools, bilingual education may not have had a <u>fair chance</u> to succeed. Many observers believe that the socio-political and attidudinal climate in many communities is not benign or even neutral. They fear that, to some degree, the cards are stacked against a fair evaluation of the program. This may or may not be true. What is true, however, is that the prevailing practices in education program evaluation are not tuned finely enough to discern the effects that negative environments may have.

Quebec has had major problems with bilingualism. Isn't bilingual education going to create the same problems here?

Most assuredly not. In order to understand why, it is necessary to look briefly at the history of Canada over the last two centuries.

Canada was settled by European immigrants from two major language groups. The two groups had major differences that went far beyond the fact that they spoke two separate languages.

1) Their countries of origin were antagonists: The French and the English fought bitterly for control of the newly settled territories in the Northeast. France sided with the 13 American colonies to wrest their independence from England. This feud also existed in varying degrees within the Canadian territories. Co-existence in the Canadian territories (now provinces), was characterized by latent hostility and distrust. This situation never had a true counterpart here. In the United States, English speakers expanded their settlements into lands that once belonged to a variety of groups: Spanish, French and Mexican. Perhaps because they were sparcely settled, the original European settlers in these territories quickly adapted to the hegemony of the new language. To this day, there is no counterpart in the United States to the Separatist Parti Quebecois and no groups that wish to replace English with any other language.

2) In Canada, French speakers tended to live in cities; English speakers in the more sparcely populated areas. In Canada, urban-rural stratification occurred along language lines. This

difference between the two population groups led quickly to important distinctions in the pattern of acquisition of wealth, power and prestige. The urban French speakers of Quebec City and Montreal followed a predictable pattern. Centers of finance, corporate headquarters and universities were established there using the French language. These urban-rural stratifications of population also led to differences in participation in the country's economy. In the mostly rural provinces where English speakers lived, the economy -- farming, logging and ranching -- was depending on the consumption and capital of the cities. The countryside became economically and politically less powerful and its English-speaking inhabitants grew to resent the lack of balance which, on the surface, seemed culturally biased. These rural-urban tensions once existed in the United States as well, but they have now blurred almost completely. Native English speakers live along-side speakers of other languages both in the cities and in the rural areas. Hispanics, for example, who constitute the largest non-English-speaking group in the nation, live in the cities in the same proportion as do other Americans -- roughly 80 percent.

3) Quebec has dual sets of social institutions; the United States does not. It is important to note that Quebec has tended to preserve separate institutions that function exclusively in one language. The most notable and important are, of course, schools and universities. It can be argued that it is not bilingualism that creates the "language problem" in Quebec, but the exact opposite: Quebec's reluctance to maintain social institutions that use both languages which denies equal importance and access to the two important

language groups that they serve. Once again, this situation does not exist in the United States to any significant degree. Non-English language institutions are practically non-existent. Those that survive are usually small, church-related and unobtrusive in their involvement in public policy discussions. The stress in bilingual education in the U.S. is on the need of language minorities to integrate into the socio-cultural, economic and political mainstream of the country. In this regard, bilingual education as it has been promoted in the United States is a good antidote for separatism rather than a force contributing to it.

Beyond the historical differences that characterize U.S. and Canadian bilingualism, it is important to note that language differences are not in and of themselves divisive. Properly handled and respected, these differences are quite comparable to the differences in religion or political ideology that co-exist between advocates of bilingual education and advocates of monolingual approaches.

It is true, however, that language and cultural differences have the potential to lead to more serious and disruptive factionalism within a society. Several countries around the world have experienced this phenomenon within the last century. The pattern in these cases is far from being an officially sanctioned bilingualism or some form of bilingual education. Most often, it is the reverse: an assiduos resistance on the part of the governments to acknowledge the existence of the various languages and cultures existing within the country, coupled with concerted efforts to obliterate the ethno-linguistic

differences that characterize these different groups. In summary, it can be said that resistance to bilingual education, because it causes resentment and tension, can be much more divisive to the fabric of a society than the inclusion of different languages and cultures into the curriculum. The former attempts to deny the right of language diversity to exist; the latter recognizes languages as a resource and allows them to be used for productive rather than divisive ends.