

# Does NCLB Leave the U.S. Behind in Bilingual Teacher Education?

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*In [the] future, any country which does not make proper provision for the support of lesser-used and indigenous languages may be regarded as an irresponsible destroyer of the world's cultural resources. (Graddol, 1999, p. 30)*

**I** write this article from the unusual vantage point of a North American professor who finds herself in Eastern Europe during the tumultuous spring of 2003, when millions around the globe protested the U.S. decision to intervene militarily in Iraq. From abroad, the U.S. appeared to be quite isolated in the international arena, not solely for its foreign policy but also for its language policy. “All you need is English” has emerged as the semi-official line of the U.S. government, while the expanding European Union is emphasizing mastery of at least two languages. Being in Europe at this time has made me see reality from a somewhat different perspective, which I would like to share in this article.

During this semester, I taught at the University of Pécs, Hungary, as a Fulbright lecturer in the Department of English Applied Linguistics. One of my classes was a doctoral course in bilingual education, composed of 13 experienced bilingual teachers and language educators who were proficient in at least three languages. While all had Hungarian ancestry, several were born in nearby countries like Croatia, Romania, and Italy.

In this course, I introduced students to the history and current state of language policy in the U.S., and, in turn through our discussions, I learned about recent language policies and programs in the European Union in general and Hungary in particular. After learning about the ebbs and flows in the history of bilingual education in the U.S. from the early years to the present, students read the full text of California’s Proposition 227 (the 1998

state initiative that aimed to limit the use of primary language instruction for immigrant students) and its pro/con arguments in *Harvard Education Letter* (Walters, 1998). They viewed a videotape of a televised debate between Ron Unz, the conservative Silicon Valley millionaire who promoted and bankrolled Proposition 227, and a Latino parent supporter of bilingual education in Pittsburg, California. The students also participated in a mock debate themselves. They studied the University of California Linguistic Minority Research Institute's report on the aftermath of Proposition 227 (Gándara et al., 2000) and Stephen Krashen's (2002) analysis of public opinion regarding bilingual education. Finally, they examined the discourse of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

Discussions and written reflections in my course showed that students were quite shocked at the current direction in U.S. language policy but also surprised about its history. When they signed up for the course, they had assumed that "bilingual education" in the U.S. was equivalent to dual language instruction. Most of these teachers worked in schools where students were learning academic subjects in two languages—Hungarian/Croatian, Hungarian/German, Hungarian/English, Croatian/English, and so on. They saw that the current shift towards English Only in the U.S. sharply contrasted with the pro-bilingual orientation of the European Union. Up to this point in their studies and professional lives, the students had revered the U.S. for its reputed long-standing promotion of bilingual education and multiculturalism. Now they began to question this reverence and raised new concerns: With this policy, how can U.S. immigrants maintain their native tongue and culture? What about the linguistic human rights of children and their families? These issues are key in the minds of Eastern Europeans on the eve of accession to the European Union.

Students also inquired about the future of U.S. bilingual teachers under these new laws. Beatrice Cocora, a Hungarian born in Transylvania (now Romania), expressed an important concern in one of her written reflections:

As a result of the law, the number of bilingual teachers will be gradually reduced. This will generate long-term problems in bilingual education. The lack of bilingual staff will make bilingual education almost impossible even in case of a future revocation of the law. It may become a *circulus viciosus*: this law results in having fewer bilingual teachers; not having enough well-trained bilingual teachers will make future, less discriminatory laws inapplicable. This will generate lack of success in new programs which, in turn, may cause the issuing of laws which restrict bilingual education, and so on. (March 28, 2003)

Beatrice identified the dilemma of this “*circulus viciosus*” (vicious cycle) in English Only laws: Bilingual programs are criticized for not being well-staffed, and yet their funding is cut so they do not have the necessary monies to expand their staffing or training. Thus, these programs cannot grow and even shrink, resulting in fewer bilingual teachers. And the cycle continues.

In this article, I explore the possible future for bilingual teachers and teacher educators in the United States in light of the recently enacted No Child Left Behind legislation. I first examine the impact of the law on bilingual education generally and compare it to language policy in the European Union. Then I discuss its impact on bilingual teachers and teacher educators specifically. Finally, to illustrate this impact, I examine the case at one university—the private, Jesuit University of San Francisco (USF) in California—which has received significant Title VII funding for bilingual teacher training and post-graduate study during the last 25 years. This funding has enabled hundreds of teachers and professors from multicultural backgrounds to work in the field of bilingual education, both in California and beyond. Now, however, the funding is seriously threatened or even curtailed, and the result could be a severe shortage of trained bilingual educators from kindergarten to the university level.

## **From Bilingual Education to English Language Acquisition**

U.S. language policy is riddled with paradox. On the one hand, the U.S. is home to more bilingual speakers than any other country in the world. Almost 20 percent of the population uses languages other than English, according to the 2000 census, and this percentage is rapidly increasing (Crawford, 2002). Yet, while tensions between linguistic diversity and English monolingualism have persisted throughout U.S. history (Ruíz, 1988), recent state and federal legislation is moving towards English monolingualism at an unprecedented pace. In 1998, Proposition 227—the “English for the Children” (or Unz) initiative—passed overwhelmingly by California voters. This initiative created ripple effects throughout the country in its ban of bilingual education: Arizona passed a similar law in 2000, Massachusetts in 2002, and other states are considering following suit. Colorado represents a hopeful exception to this trend by becoming the first state to defeat the Unz initiative in November 2002, with 56% voting against the anti-bilingual amendment, Proposition 31 (Padres Unidos, 2003).

Most significantly, President Bush staged an unofficial English Only coup when he signed the comprehensive No Child Left Behind Act in 2002

and essentially killed the Bilingual Education Act (BEA). Also known as Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Educational Act, the BEA was first passed in 1968, representing a civil rights victory for the bilingual community (Nieto, 2002). However, this act was never a true mandate for dual language instruction, and its ambiguity led to its being interpreted as English instruction for bilingual children (Crawford, 1995). Ruíz (1998) argues that the original BEA and its revisions in 1974, 1978, and 1984 supported the use of a student's home language solely for the purpose of making the transition to English, adding, "One might well ask what justifies calling this kind of education 'bilingual'" (p. 551). As Ruíz suggests, Title VII always tended towards assimilation rather than linguistic pluralism and ethnic pride (p. 552).

Still, subsequent laws and court decisions (like the 1974 *Lau v. Nichols* and the 1981 *Castaneda v. Pickard*), along with lobbying by the National Association of Bilingual Education (NABE), were able to build upon Title VII to promote the use of students' home languages, albeit in a limited way. The 1994 Improving America's Schools Act took a leap forward by support-

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ing proven effective, innovative bilingual programs, such as two way bilingual immersion and developmental bilingual models, in which the goal was not just English acquisition but bilingual competence. But the former Title VII exists no more. In its place is Title III of the No Child Left Behind Act, called "Language Instruction for Limited English Proficient and Immigrant Students," which endorses the acquisition of English only and never once uses the term "bilingual." The core of Title III is Part A, entitled "English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement and Academic Achievement," which stresses English only programs and omits primary language instruction (Crawford, 2005).

### **Monolingualism in the U.S. vs. Plurilingualism in Europe**

The discourse of NCLB reveals an English Only stance. Indeed, it appears as if the government performed a global computer search throughout its legislative text for the term "bilingual" and replaced it with the term "English language acquisition." For example, the Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs (OBEMLA) is now renamed as the Office of English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic

Achievement for Limited-English-Proficient Students (Crawford, 2002b). Eliminating the word is a powerful step towards eliminating the reality.

In contrast to the language of NCLB, the discourse of the language policy in the European Union centers upon “plurilingualism.” The Council of Europe’s (1998) “Common European Framework of Reference for Languages”(CEFRL) stresses the “richness and diversity of European cultural life through greater mutual knowledge of national and regional languages, including those less widely used” (p. 2). This document acknowledges that a “sustained, lifelong effort” must be encouraged to meet the needs of a “multilingual and multicultural Europe” (p. 2). As a result, the CEFRL presents a framework with eight measures that each nation must implement for the teaching and learning of modern languages. One of these measures, “Bilingual Education in Bilingual or Multilingual Areas,” requires specific steps be taken to ensure that:

- › there is parity of esteem between all the languages and cultures involved so that children in each community may have the opportunity to develop oracy and literacy in the language of their own community as well as to learn to understand and appreciate the language and culture of the other;
- › where bilingual and bicultural education is provided, it develops a genuinely intercultural outlook and provides a foundation for the learning of further languages. (pp. 5-6)

Another of the eight measures is “Teacher Training” which mandates taking “steps to ensure that adequate numbers of suitably trained language teachers are available at all levels so that where appropriate a wide range of languages may be taught” (Council of Europe, 1998, p. 6). The measure calls for collaboration with institutions of higher education to provide a high level of training for current and future teachers. Part of this training involves developing teachers’ linguistic proficiency in the target language, including participation in study abroad programs.

Certainly, “bilingual education” means different things in the U. S. and European contexts. In the U. S., it has meant providing instruction in the majority language of English to non-native speakers of English through the use of the native tongue. In Europe, it has meant developing proficiency in a second, third, or fourth world language while maintaining and developing proficiency in the native tongue. “Plurilingualism” in Europe is essential for trade, business, travel, education, and communication. As the global economy expands, isn’t it also essential for the U. S.?

Unlike in the U.S., language policy makers in the United Kingdom, who have played a key role in developing the CEFRL, are keenly aware of the limits of English monolingualism. Graddol (1999) points out that despite the emergence of English as the leading international language, “The future of global communication is unlikely to be based on a single language—English or any other. Rather, the future will be multilingual. People will need to be proficient in more languages than ever before” (p. 24). In addition, in 50 years, three other languages will have the same number of speakers as English: Arabic, Spanish, and Hindu/Urdu (Graddol, p. 26). For these reasons, among others, English monolingualism is not sufficient for our young people to function successfully in tomorrow’s world.

Yet, the No Child Left Behind Act exclusively emphasizes rapid language acquisition and academic achievement in English, eliminating bilingualism as a goal of instructional programs (Crawford, 2003). Thus, the monolingual orientation of No Child Left Behind puts the U.S. in an extremely isolated position in the world and places youth growing up in the U.S. at a disadvantage. This monolingual orientation is shaped and reinforced in two ways: First and foremost, students who are non-native speakers of English are now thoroughly deprived of the opportunity to study in their home language and, consequently, may soon lose that language and become proficient only in English. Even worse, if placed in ineffective English language programs, such as ESL pull-out or “sink-or-swim” mainstream English classes, they might never attain academic proficiency in English on top of losing their native tongue (Valdés, 2001; Nieto, 2002).

Secondly, native English-speaking students are given little opportunity to develop proficiency in a second world language since typically they do not begin “foreign language” study until secondary school—much later than their European peers (Curtain, 2003). One exception to this rule occurs in dual immersion programs, in which students enroll as early as kindergarten. However, in Title III of NCLB, a serious double standard exists in dual immersion programs: Native English speakers are encouraged to participate while English language learners (ELLs) are discouraged. Thus bilingualism appears to be a privilege for native English speakers only (Crawford, 2003). In these ways, current U.S. language policy destroys the latent linguistic resources that immigrant students bring to school.

In fact, Title III of NCLB dramatically alters how programs for English language learners are funded, inevitably leading to cuts in bilingual programs. Under the former Title VII, programs were funded through competitive grants submitted directly to the federal government. Now Congress

allocates formula grants to states, and programs are funded only through state educational agencies (Crawford, 2005). A serious problem in this new system is that the total amount allocated (\$665 million) has remained the same for the past three years, even though the number of English language learners nationwide has increased greatly, leading the National Association of Bilingual Education (NABE) to claim that “bilingual education has been left behind in the President’s budget” (NABE, 2003, para. 3).

Furthermore, to receive funding from the states, programs must meet NCLB’s “accountability” standards, which many educators find rigid, if not punitive, for English language learners (Peterson, 2002). These standards include annual testing of all students in English, the instructional objective of rapid acquisition of English, and the use of “scientifically based” teaching methods. What counts as “scientifically based” is not delineated, leaving the criteria wide open to politically motivated interpretation. For example, Ron Unz’s (2001) claim that ELL test scores increase through English immersion is considered to be “scientifically based” whereas longitudinal research confirming the effectiveness of bilingual programs is not (Thomas & Collier, 1995; Crawford, 2002a; Peterson, 2002). Thus, in states like California with anti-bilingual initiatives, this system serves to discourage funding of instructional programs for ELLs which promote bilingualism as their objective.

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## **Impact on Bilingual Teachers and Teacher Educators**

With a predictable decline in bilingual programs overall due to the NCLB’s reduced support and shift towards English acquisition alone, bilingual teachers in this country could become an endangered species. Herein lies another paradox in U.S. language policy—bilingual teacher education. On one hand, a common argument against bilingual education is the scarcity of well-trained bilingual teachers. Some school districts have had to recruit native speakers of the target language from other nations such as Spain or the Philippines to staff bilingual classrooms. Yet the 47 million U.S. residents whose native languages are other than English could provide an immense pool of potential bilingual teachers if they were provided with both bilingual academic and professional development. Such professional training would prepare them to serve as skilled bilingual teachers within their own communities.

On the other hand, under NCLB these opportunities for training are even more restricted than before. According to Crawford (2005), funding for professional development has been cut to half the amount appropriated in 2001. This cut will inevitably lead to a drastic reduction in the number of certified bilingual teachers. By making such deep cuts in bilingual teacher education programs, NCLB ignores the critical importance of quality instruction. Public schools in the U.S. now have more than 4.4 million students designated as English Language Learners (ELL)—10% of the total enrollment—and this number is increasing (Crawford, 2005). Teachers equipped with linguistic and cultural knowledge of their students, particularly their ELLs, are most effective at reaching and supporting those students academically (Nieto, 2002). Funding for bilingual teacher training should be growing not shrinking, if this nation is to ensure the future success of all our children.

Evidence of the potential reduction of certified bilingual teachers has been seen in California since the implementation of Proposition 227 in 1998. Gándara et al. (2000) show that only one-third of the teachers with bilingual credentials in California were actually working in bilingual classrooms in 1998-1999, just one year after the implementation of 227 (pp. 22-23). Similarly, the number of bilingual teachers in training dropped by half. After Proposition 227, school districts in California began to recruit and hire fewer bilingual teachers, thus lowering the motivation for candidates to pursue the extra courses and training required for the bilingual certificate known as BCLAD (Bilingual Cross-Cultural Language and Academic Development). Effective in 2004, the state of California will discontinue offering teaching credentials with a BCLAD emphasis. A similar pattern will likely result nation-wide due to the exclusive focus on English language acquisition underlying NCLB, and fewer candidates will seek specialized bilingual training. The result will be an even more dire shortage of experienced bilingual teachers in the U.S.

Funding for professional development under Title III of NCLB also has undergone a dramatic transformation. Instead of there being multiple funding avenues, a single National Professional Development Project (NPDP) now awards grants to institutions of higher education (IHEs) on a competitive basis for a five year period (see <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OELA/profdevelopmentfacts.html>). Two Title VII programs that formerly supported professional development for future bilingual teachers and teacher educators are no longer funded under the Title III NPDP: postgraduate fellowships (MA and doctoral level) and Career Ladder Programs. Only continuation grants for previously funded Title VII programs are awarded under



Title III. This change results in a serious loss for colleges of education with bilingual education programs, as is evident in the case of the University of San Francisco (USF), described below.

### **University of San Francisco: A Case Study**

In the last 40 years, the University of San Francisco School of Education has trained teachers, teacher educators, and administrators to work as professionals in the Bay Area schools, noted for their linguistic and cultural diversity. It has a long track record (nearly 25 years) of providing Title VII postgraduate fellowships in bilingual education, leading towards both master's and doctoral degrees. Since USF is a private Jesuit university, tuition costs are high, and these fellowships enabled many educators who otherwise would have been unable to afford the expense to pursue postgraduate study. Title VII fellows at USF who completed their doctorates often went on to become bilingual teacher educators at public universities or leading bilingual administrators in school districts.

From 1979-2002, 121 candidates received their doctorates (Ed.D. degrees) in International and Multicultural Education (IME) as Title VII fellows, nearly one-third of the total number of IME graduates. Of the 121 fellows, 15 are now full-time faculty members in bilingual/multicultural education at California State Universities, nine have served in high-level administrative positions in local school districts, two have worked in the California State Department of Education, and two have taught at Bay Area community colleges. All the graduates are themselves bilingual and the majority are from underrepresented groups in higher education; thus, this grant played a major role in increasing the ethnic, cultural, and linguistic diversity of the profession. Under Title III of NCLB, however, these fellowships have been eliminated, ending a pathway to educational leadership positions for talented individuals from bilingual and multicultural communities.

Another former Title VII program, the Career Ladder Program, was designed to support paraprofessionals and teachers on emergency permits working in bilingual classrooms to gain the necessary credentials required for their positions. In 1999, USF, in collaboration with the San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD), received a five-year Career Ladder Program grant of \$250,000 per year. The USF/SFUSD proposal aimed to support a total of 75 candidates (five cohorts of 15 participants each) to qualify for Bilingual Cross-Cultural Language and Academic Development credentials in Spanish, Filipino, and Chinese (Cantonese). Title VII funds were

matched with USF scholarships and AmeriCorps grants to provide full tuition for Career Ladder participants. With approximately 70 percent of the participants being students of color, the once predominantly white teacher education program at USF became the most diverse in the San Francisco Bay Area. The Career Ladder Program served to narrow the racial/linguistic/ethnic gap between classroom teachers and students that prevails in most urban school districts, like San Francisco.

Ironically, the number of applicants to the Career Ladder Grant has grown smaller and smaller due to cuts in bilingual classrooms, especially at the secondary school level. In the third year of the grant, USF had to recruit beyond SFUSD into neighboring districts for candidates to meet the goal of 15 candidates per year. Now with the cuts in Title III coupled with the ending of BCLAD credentials in California, programs such as the USF Career Ladder Program face a bleak future.

## **Conclusion**

The United States never has had an explicitly “official” language (Crawford, 1995). Yet through its legal discourse and its new funding regulations, No Child Left Behind is moving the U.S. swiftly in the direction of English monolingualism. NCLB strips away many of the gains towards bilingualism—however small—which were won through civil rights struggles in the 1960s and were institutionalized in the 1968 Title VII Bilingual Education Act. In its 30+ year history, Title VII funded many thousands of bilingual teachers and teacher educators across the U.S., enabling them to earn certification and advanced degrees, so that they could best serve English language learners. Now these opportunities are gone, and these are no small losses.

Within the next decade, the United States faces a dire shortage of teachers in general, many of them in ELL classrooms. 700,000 new teaching positions will become available from retirements (Katz & Kohl, 2002). Who will fill these positions? How will they be prepared? Nieto (2002) argues that professional training in linguistic diversity should be required for *all* teachers in U.S. schools today given the high numbers of English language learners. All teachers, she argues, should experience learning a second language, not simply to understand their students linguistically but also to gain empathy with how demanding the process can be. Bilingual teacher education, Nieto further asserts, should not be relegated to the “basement” but instead should be expanded into the mainstream (pp. 205-225).

The European Council, which has developed a policy recognizing the need for a bilingual—or even “plurilingual”—teaching force, grasps the fact that we live in an interconnected world in which multilingualism is essential. Sadly, NCLB moves the U.S. in the opposite direction, making bilingual teacher education a relic of the past. It is critical that our educational policy makers learn from the rest of the world—as well as from its own bilingual educators—and move bilingualism to center stage.

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### Author’s Note

The author wishes to acknowledge James Crawford who, through his Web site, [www.ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/JWCRAWFORD/](http://www.ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/JWCRAWFORD/), generously keeps the public aware of the latest changes in U.S. language policy.

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