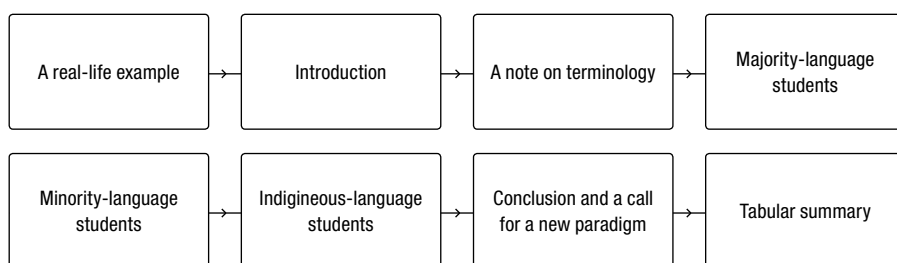


1 UNITED STATES OF AMERICA: The Paradoxes and Possibilities of Bilingual Education

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CHAPTER NAVIGATOR



A REAL-LIFE EXAMPLE

‘What country is this?’ ‘America!’ ‘What language do we speak here?’ ‘English!’ came the rallying cries from the standing-room only crowd at a school board meeting in the small community of Forest Lake, Minnesota. It was the winter of 2003. Two years earlier a new parent, Shannon Peterson,¹ had approached school board officials about establishing an immersion programme. They asked her to identify 20 other families who would be willing to place their children in a pilot programme. She found 60 families. The school board organised a task force that included Shannon, parents representing the interested families, and local teachers and administrators. The task force worked tirelessly to inform the community of the benefits of immersion and was convinced the district would launch a programme. The 2003 meeting signalled a change. Fear, ignorance and anti-immigrant sentiments served as powerful forces against the proposal.

Shortly after that meeting the school board decided not to open an immersion programme, citing a lack of financial resources. The parent group pursued other options – a different nearby school district, a private or charter school.² The group’s tenacity and stamina were major forces that functioned

as effective counterweights to the obstacles they faced. They eventually established a charter school once the Minnesota Department of Education agreed to authorise them.³ Lakes International Language Academy (LILA), an early total foreign language immersion programme (100% immersion in early grades) with an International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme curriculum, was launched in September of that same year. LILA opened its doors to 177 children with two Spanish immersion classes each in kindergarten, first and second grade (ages 5–7), as well as third- and fourth-grade classes that received enhanced Spanish-as-a-foreign-language instruction. The latter was phased out as the immersion programme grew. LILA's new director Cam Hedlund had spent years in the community as a principal and was highly trusted and respected, and LILA benefited from his political capital.

Now, in 2014, the highly popular K–6 school serves over 700 students, offering both Spanish and Chinese immersion. The Chinese programme opened in 2011 and currently encompasses Grades K–3. A significant Foreign Language Assistance Program (FLAP) federal grant for 2006–9 provided the stability needed in the Spanish programme to try out Chinese immersion. The Spanish immersion students also study Chinese as a foreign language, and Chinese immersion students have Spanish classes.

Ironically, the school district that opposed immersion in 2003 began losing students to LILA *and* dollars (since state per-pupil funding follows the student). They turned to LILA for assistance in establishing their own immersion programmes. In 2010 the district elected to offer partial immersion (50% in English, 50% in Spanish) at its two elementary schools. The board did not wish to compete with LILA's total programme and wanted to allay parent concerns about English language development. Meanwhile, the district was instrumental in creating public, non-charter junior-high and high-school immersion continuation programmes for LILA graduates.

Important mechanisms support LILA. Initially, the Minnesota Advocates for Immersion Network (MAIN),⁴ a grassroots consortium of immersion educators and University of Minnesota researchers/teacher educators, as well as the Immersion Projects at the University's Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition (CARLA),⁵ were particularly valuable as LILA established roots. LILA responded to parental needs and concerns by offering a pupil before- and after-school care programme, parent language classes, student summer language camps and orientation camps for incoming kindergarteners. Another beneficial mechanism is the Amity Institute (www.amity.org), which provides interns from Spanish- and Chinese-speaking countries to serve as 'language ambassadors' at LILA.

LILA is thriving, yet remains challenged by issues faced by most US immersion programmes. There is a shortage of qualified (according to state

licensure standards), highly proficient teachers who are prepared for immersion settings. Per-pupil funding for charter schools is lower than in regular public schools, and there are few federal and state grants to support immersion. Despite these enduring challenges, LILA is an indisputable success and serves as a model for others. This example illustrates that it is the passion, commitment and sense of mission of some indefatigable individuals who know how to use existing mechanisms and create new ones that has been the driving force in the establishment of many US immersion programmes.

INTRODUCTION

In many ways, the US is a country of paradoxes, many of which are driven by conflicts between personal freedom and societal order – fierce independence and governmental supervision. This is also the case with bilingual education. For example, on the one hand, the US government has recognised the critical need for US citizens to speak languages other than English for well over 50 years (Jackson and Malone 2009); on the other hand, it consistently institutes policies that squander existing linguistic resources amongst heritage speakers/immigrant students. Another paradox is that despite persistent anti-immigrant sentiments and English-only agendas, the US is experiencing unprecedented growth in bilingual/immersion programmes (e.g. Eaton 2014; Maxwell 2012; Mellon 2014). Forces such as the belief in the importance of bilingualism and mechanisms such as state-level support for immersion programming serve as effective counterweights to anti-immigrant rhetoric and advocates of English-only policies.

The remainder of this chapter first discusses terminology associated with US immersion programmes. It then describes bilingual education for majority-language learners, minority-language learners and Indigenous minorities by briefly summarising their unique historical contexts and identifying current programme types. Throughout these discussions, the forces, mechanisms and counterweights that have influenced bilingual programming are examined. The chapter concludes with a call for a new paradigm that brings together advocates for all types of bilingual education in the quest to promote bi/multilingualism for all.

A NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

The use of the term ‘bilingual education’ as an umbrella term for programmes that use at least two languages as media of school-based instruction has

become highly politicised in the US. Historically, ‘bilingual education’ in the US was used to refer only to programmes developed for minority-language students. As anti-bilingual education initiatives took hold in some states in the late 1990s and early 2000s, the label ‘dual-language education’ emerged as an alternative and more inclusive term to refer to a range of bilingual programmes serving minority- and/or majority-language students. At the same time, it is also a more restrictive term in that it refers only to additive (strong) bilingual programmes, while the term ‘bilingual education’, as used internationally, encompasses both weak and strong forms (Baker and Jones 1998). Additive (strong) bilingual programmes are designed to allow students to acquire a new language at no expense to their first, native language, whereas subtractive (weak) bilingual programmes do not provide for continued development and maintenance of students’ first languages (Lambert 1984).

In the US, dual-language programmes aim to develop additive bilingualism and biliteracy in at least two languages, grade-level academic achievement, and inter-, cross- or multicultural competence (Christian 2011). They are subject-matter driven programmes in which a foreign, second, heritage or Indigenous language is used as the vehicle to teach academic content for 50% or more of instructional time during the Pre-K–5/6 school years and, ideally, into secondary education. They also provide for the continued development of the majority language, English.

These programmes may serve student populations that are linguistically homogeneous (e.g. students who speak English as a home language), or linguistically heterogeneous (e.g. a combination of English speakers and Spanish speakers). Howard, Olague and Rogers (2003) included four distinct additive bilingual programme models under the ‘dual-language umbrella’: ‘developmental bilingual education’ (DBE) – serving minority-language students; ‘one-way’ foreign language immersion (OWI) – targeting majority-language speakers; ‘two-way’ immersion (TWI) – enrolling a linguistically heterogeneous student population; and ‘heritage’ or Indigenous Language Immersion (ILI) – which seeks to revitalise endangered Indigenous languages and cultures, and typically serves children with Indigenous ancestry. ILI programmes may be one-way or two-way, depending upon their student composition (with most being one-way). They have a set of challenges that differs from programmes focused on modern languages and thus should be in a category of their own (Fortune and Tedick 2008).

A challenge with terminology in the US is that often ‘dual-language education’ is used as a synonym for TWI education. Despite concerted efforts to promote ‘dual-language education’ as an inclusive, umbrella term, its use as

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an equivalent for TWI persists. Complicating matters further, ‘dual immersion’ is used to describe ‘two-way’ programmes, and ‘one-way dual-language’ to describe DBE (Thomas and Collier 2012). Moreover, in its state-level initiative, Utah chose ‘dual-language immersion’ as an umbrella term to represent both OWI and TWI (Leite and Cook, this volume). This terminological challenge inevitably causes confusion, particularly among the American public and often the media.

Because this chapter describes some weak (subtractive) forms of bilingual education and because of the confusion that surrounds ‘dual-language education’ as an umbrella term, the term ‘bilingual education’ will be utilised throughout the chapter to refer to programmes that use a minimum of two languages as media of school-based instruction for at least some of K–12 education. The different programme models described in this chapter are summarised in Table 1 (see below).

Table 1: US Bilingual programme models

	Programme	Student population	Goals and description
Subtractive (weak)	Structured English Immersion (SEI)	Minority-language students	English language acquisition and academic achievement – they intensively teach students English to prepare them as quickly as possible to be mainstreamed into regular English-medium education.
	Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE)	Minority-language students	English language acquisition and academic achievement – they use the minority language for instruction as a temporary bridge while students learn English so that they can be mainstreamed into regular English-medium education as quickly as possible.
Additive (strong)	Developmental Bilingual Education (DBE)	Minority-language students	Bilingualism, academic achievement and cross-cultural competence – they maintain and develop students’ L1 while they acquire English and use both languages for instruction until at least Grade 5 or 6 (ages 11–12).
	One-Way Foreign Language Immersion (OWI)	Majority-language students (primarily)	Bilingualism, academic achievement and cross-cultural competence – they teach students through the medium of a foreign language and English until at least Grade 5 or 6 (ages 11–12).
	Two-Way Immersion (TWI)	Minority-language and majority-language students	Bilingualism, academic achievement and intercultural competence – they integrate 2 learner groups and provide instruction through the medium of both the minority language and English until at least Grade 5 or 6 (ages 11–12).
	Indigenous Language Immersion (ILI)	Majority-language students with Native American/Indigenous ancestry (primarily)	Revitalisation of endangered Indigenous languages and cultures and academic achievement – they use the Indigenous language and English for subject-matter instruction, but programmes vary in terms of the instructional time devoted to both languages. They also emphasise Indigenous cultural values and traditions.

BILINGUAL/IMMERSION EDUCATION FOR MAJORITY-LANGUAGE STUDENTS

Historical context:

In the late 1960s, Professor Russ Campbell of the University of California Los Angeles was disillusioned by the abysmal results of traditional foreign language instruction in the US. He became intrigued by the Canadian French immersion experiment in St. Lambert (see Genesee, this volume), and during visits to St. Lambert he consulted extensively with students, parents, teachers, their McGill University partners and school officials (Campbell 1984). He later convinced Culver City Unified School District in California to adopt the Canadian model and launch in 1971 the first US foreign-language (Spanish) immersion programme for majority-language students (Campbell 1984). Thus, Canada's St. Lambert programme served as a powerful example or mechanism facilitating the establishment of OWI in the US.

As positive research results from programme evaluation studies emerged in California (e.g. Campbell 1984), paralleling those reported in Canada, interest in the programme grew. By 1977, 12 US schools offered OWI and, two years later, that number nearly doubled, according to a directory maintained by the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL).⁶ By 1999, the number of schools offering OWI gradually increased to 280. In the 1980s, federal desegregation monies for public schools served as a mechanism to support OWI programmes. These programmes could attract students from across school districts and in that way were seen as contributing to the desegregation of highly segregated neighbourhood schools. Parents like Shannon Peterson, who believed in the power of bilingualism and its importance for their children, were another important mechanism that served to promote these programmes. Parents lobbied school district officials to offer OWI, and some moved to districts that offered this programme choice.

During the early to mid-2000s, CAL reported a nationwide drop in the number of programmes offering foreign language immersion (see n. 6). At the same time, a large-scale study also reported a significant drop in the number of US elementary schools offering foreign-language instruction from 1997 to 2008 (Pufahl and Rhodes 2011); lack of funding and teachers were two of several reasons cited for this drop. However, by the end of that decade, the tide turned.

The immersion landscape changed dramatically in 2009 when Utah passed unprecedented legislation and provided funding for immersion (see Mehisto, Introduction, and Leite and Cook, Chapter 5). This marked a shift in how

programmes were established in some parts of the country – from their grassroots origins to top-down, state-level mandates. States such as Arizona, Delaware, Georgia and Wyoming have since followed Utah's lead, implementing immersion programmes with state level support (G. Roberts, personal communication, 19 March 2014). A powerful networking mechanism that has led several states to follow Utah's example is the National Council of State Supervisors of Foreign Languages (NCSSFL; www.ncssfl.org).

State-based initiatives like Utah's have received considerable positive media attention. This attention has been a strong mechanism spurring the development of immersion elsewhere and its continued growth in areas with a long history of successful immersion programming (e.g. Minnesota, Oregon). Although the actual number is quite likely much higher, the 2014 CAL Directory (see n. 6), which is based on school districts self-reporting, includes nearly 600 foreign-language immersion programmes.

Types of immersion programmes for majority-language students:

The US offers immersion programmes in multiple modern languages (see CAL Directories). Spanish remains the most prevalent for OWI and TWI programmes, but French and Mandarin Chinese are also prominent. Chinese in particular has grown in popularity, not only because of China's expanded role in the global economy, but also because US federal funding for 'critical languages' (like Mandarin, Korean, Arabic) and monies from the Chinese government have served as strong mechanisms to support programme development.

Two main bilingual education programme types – OWI and TWI – are offered for majority-language students; the latter combines majority-language with minority-language students in the same classrooms and offers instruction in English and the minority partner language (e.g. Spanish). Each of these models has variations. The US only offers programmes of the 'early' variety – those that begin in pre-school, kindergarten, or Grade 1 – unlike Canada and other countries that also offer 'delayed' (Grade 4 start), and 'late' immersion (Grade 7 start).

One-way 'partial' immersion education: Partial immersion programmes offer 50% of subject-matter instruction in the second or new language (L2) and 50% in the majority language, English, from the beginning and throughout the duration of the elementary school years. Utah adopted this model (see Leite and Cook this volume) and called it '50:50' rather than 'partial' immersion because it was believed that the term 'partial' would not be interpreted favourably by parents and legislators. Since Utah's adoption of the '50:50'

descriptor, it has become increasingly common to see these programmes described as ‘50:50’ rather than partial, although ‘50:50’ was initially used exclusively to describe a TWI variety.

One-way ‘total’ immersion education: Total OWI programmes begin with 100% of subject-matter instruction in the L2 for the first few years. Then, about 30–45 minutes of English (L1) language arts instruction is formally introduced into the curriculum as early as Grade 2 and as late as Grade 4. More instructional time in English is gradually added each year so that by the end of elementary school (Grade 5 or 6, ages 11–12), students have about 50% of instructional time in each language.

Two-way immersion education: There are two main varieties of TWI programmes: the 50:50 and 90:10 model. The 50:50 model is parallel to partial OWI. In 90:10 programmes, 90% of instruction occurs in the minority language and 10% in English for the first years of the programme, with a gradual increase in English and decrease in the minority language as students advance in grade, until a balance is reached by upper elementary. There are also other variations such as 80:20 or 70:30. The Alicia Chacón International School in El Paso, Texas, is considered an 80:10:10 model, because all students study a third language (Chinese, German, Japanese or Russian) for 10% of the time throughout the programme; it transitions to 45:45:10 for Grades 5–8 (Calderón and Minaya-Rowe 2003). CAL lists in its self-reported TWI directory approximately 450 TWI programmes although, again, the actual number is likely much higher.⁷ The TWI model is discussed in more detail in the next section.

As in Canada, studies in the US have shown that majority-language students in OWI and TWI perform at or above grade-level norms on standardised tests of academic achievement administered in English (e.g., Downs-Reid 2000; Essama 2007; Lindholm-Leary 2001). Overall, majority-language students in immersion programmes display fluency and confidence when using the L2, are skilled at using communication strategies and develop high levels of comprehension in the L2 (see Genesee 2004, and Genesee and Lindholm-Leary 2013, for reviews). However, when it comes to production skills, immersion students’ language lacks complexity, socio-linguistic appropriateness, grammatical accuracy and lexical precision (see Lyster 2007, for a review).

BILINGUAL/IMMERSION EDUCATION FOR MINORITY-LANGUAGE STUDENTS

Historical context:

The historical context of bilingual education for minority-language students is much more complicated than that for majority-language students, and space limitations do not allow comprehensive coverage of it within this chapter. In a brief history of US bilingual education, Baker and Jones (1998) identify four overlapping periods – permissive, restrictive, opportunistic and dismissive. The ‘permissive period’ took place during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as European immigrants arrived. At this time, linguistic diversity was widely accepted in the US, and many bilingual and even some monolingual German, Dutch and Norwegian schools existed. This permissive attitude toward languages, a force in and of itself, was shaped by other forces, such as competition for students between private and public schools during the second half of the nineteenth century, ethnic homogeneity in many areas and desires to learn English (and by extension to belong to the majority group), while simultaneously maintaining and continuing to develop mother tongues. Despite the overall positive attitudes toward languages besides English that characterised this era, Ovando (2003) stresses that this period did not actively foster bilingualism; ‘rather, a policy of linguistic assimilation without coercion seemed to prevail’.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the permissive period evolved into the ‘restrictive period’ as attitudes toward bilingualism and bilingual education shifted dramatically. The restrictive period continued through to the 1960s and, arguably, many of its underlying forces persist today. An influx of immigrants at the turn of the century contributed to fear of foreigners and ‘the call for integration, harmonization and assimilation of immigrants, whose lack of English language and English literacy was seen as a source of social, political and economic concern’ (Baker and Jones 1998). ‘Americanisation’ emerged as a force. This was reflected in the Nationality Act of 1906, a mechanism that made English a prerequisite to naturalised citizenship. US participation in World War I led to anti-German sentiment, and the English language was perceived as a unifying force, with other languages seen as threats to Americanisation.

The launch of Sputnik by Russia in 1957 sparked concern about the quality of US education and foreign-language instruction. Such concerns were rooted in forces such as the fear of falling behind Russia and the desire for the US to be the lead nation globally. The National Defense Education Act (1958)

led to increased foreign language learning for *majority*-language students in K–12 settings and universities and, in turn, promoted a somewhat more tolerant attitude toward languages other than English (Baker and Jones 1998). Ovando (2003) notes, however, that while

the country was encouraging the study of foreign languages for English monolinguals, at great cost and with great inefficiency, ... it was destroying through monolingual English instruction the linguistic gifts that children from non-English-language backgrounds bring to our schools.

The Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s and the 1964 Civil Rights Act, which prohibited discrimination on the basis of race, colour or creed, symbolised the start of a shift to less negative attitudes toward ethnic groups and more positive attitudes toward linguistic diversity. These mechanisms and forces heralded in a ‘period of opportunity’ that lasted for two decades. The Coral Way Elementary School established by Cuban exiles in Miami-Dade County, Florida, in 1963 is often associated with the resurgence of bilingual education during this period. Assuming that their stay in the US was temporary, these parents wanted school support in developing their children’s native Spanish, but also in acquiring English. The school brought together Spanish-speaking learners of English and English-speaking learners of Spanish, and is credited with being the nation’s first TWI programme, though it was not labelled as such (Christian 2011; Fortune and Tedick 2008).

The ‘period of opportunity’ was marked by significant legislation and a number of lawsuits. These mechanisms were used to further develop bilingual programming. The Bilingual Education Act of 1968 authorised the use of languages other than English in education, but still only allocated funds to support native-language instruction for minority-language students temporarily, with the aim of transitioning them to English rather than supporting ongoing development of their mother tongues. A landmark 1974 US Supreme Court decision known as ‘Lau v. Nichols’ prohibited English ‘submersion’ programmes for minority-language children and led to ‘Lau remedies’, designed to eliminate past educational practices that had been ruled unlawful under Lau v. Nichols. Lau remedies included English as a Second Language (ESL) programmes, English tutoring and some forms of bilingual education. The emphasis remained on transitional use of students’ first language (L1) for instruction rather than long-term L1 development. Nevertheless, the Lau v. Nichols decision ‘... had an enormous impact on the development of bilingual education in the [US]’ (Ovando 2003).

The 1980s marked the beginning of the ‘dismissive period’. This period gave rise to the ‘English Only’ movement, which has since been sponsored by