

# UC Berkeley

## Newsletters

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## COMMENTARY

## The Good and Bad News About Bilingual Education Under The Bush Administration

About the best that can be said for the bilingual education portion of the Bush administration's education bill is that it does not seek to dismantle primary language instruction. In comparison to what has happened in California and Arizona, and what is threatening to happen in New York and other states, holding the line doesn't look so bad. The administration-backed bill working its way through Congress says that districts receiving federal funds can teach children in their home language, but these districts must try to move students into all-English instruction within three years. The legislation also contains provisions to hold schools accountable for student achievement, which is good; yet, accountability is solely in terms of English attainment, which is not so good.

Bush and his advisors, both in Austin and Washington, have not demonized bilingual education. To the contrary, and to their credit, they have been relatively progressive on the issue. Bush himself makes a point of showing he knows and values Spanish. In Texas, schools are supposed to provide primary language instruction for students who are not proficient in English. There is every reason to believe that federal policy will continue to support at least this level of bilingual education, although we can be sure that under a Republican administration state and local control will be big players. In fact, Bush's proposal calls for consolidating existing programs for bilingual and immigrant education into flexible, performance-based state grants.

Unfortunately, however, the Bush administration is missing an opportunity to take the discussion about bilingual education to another level. Most Americans, if they think about it all, consider bilingual education a compensatory program. The Administration-backed bill is consistent with this. Children who speak a language other than English can be educated in their home language until they learn enough English to go into the regular all-English program. Most bilingual programs are of this sort, known as transition programs. Generally speaking, good transition programs are probably preferable to all-English "immersion" programs. There is growing evidence, however, that two-way bilingual education might be an even better bet (see the Center for Applied Linguistics website, [www.cal.org](http://www.cal.org), for data on two-way programs, bibliographies, and publications).

As people familiar with bilingual education know, the goal of two-way programs is bilingualism and biliteracy for all students—those who are learning English and those who already know English. Despite the growth in the number of two-way programs in the U.S. (there are currently more than 250), they comprise a minuscule proportion of bilingual programs. That is too bad, since two-way programs offer the possibility of adding a new and important dimension to our educational system. Critics will counter that our educational system does a poor job of accomplishing what is already on its agenda—why add another responsibility? This is a shortsighted view.

Why should we care about fostering bilingualism? There are several reasons. First, bilingualism improves a person's economic prospects. As has been reported on the pages of countless U.S. newspapers, businesses are actively seeking employees who speak a language—in some cases, two languages—in addition to English. The Los Angeles Times, for example, ran a story titled "Speaking Other Tongues is a Real Job Advantage." A later article quoted a career services counselor: "People who are trilingual, who speak English plus an Asian and a Latin language, are in really high demand." Given the increasing mobility of people and markets, the demand for bi- and tri-lingual employees has got nowhere to go but up.

Second, there are inherent cultural, social, and intellectual benefits of bilingualism. Bilinguals can communicate in two languages, they can speak with and understand more people, read more literature, appreciate more cultures. Some studies have also shown that children in bilingual programs have better attitudes toward other languages and speakers of other languages, perhaps because of the increased communicative competence bilingualism confers.

Third, bilingualism might be good for cognitive development. Children who grow up bilingual or who begin to learn a second language while maintaining their first language seem to have certain mental advantages over children who grow up monolingual. Bilinguals have greater cognitive flexibility. Bilingual children also seem to realize at an earlier age that the word for something and the thing itself are two different things; that is, words are simply arbitrary speech sounds.

The real tragedy of bilingual education in this country is that it has become so caught up in arguments over “compensatory education.” Instead of seeing the language a child brings to school as a resource and a foundation, we have seen it—if it happens not to be English—as an impediment to learning. I don’t mean to suggest there are easy answers to the challenges we face in educating children from non-English speaking homes. Two-way programs are tough to implement, and not all schools have the resources and populations needed. I know from hard personal experience it can even be hard to maintain two languages at home. Nonetheless, we need to take the discussion about bilingualism, bilingual education, and the role of non-English languages in our educational system to another plane, one in which we recognize language as a source of social capital. It’s too bad the Bush administration has chosen not to help lead the way.

—Claude Goldenberg  
California State University, Long Beach

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## DISSERTATION GRANT REPORT

### From Policy to Practice: The Influence of Proposition 227 on Teachers’ Work and Literacy Instruction

THOMAS T. STRITIKUS, UC BERKELEY

Proposition 227, the voter initiative mandating English immersion for the state’s English learner population, was passed by the California electorate in June of 1998. It represents a weighty experiment in the legislation of educational and linguistic policy. Understanding the influence of the new law on teachers’ work and literacy instruction was the focus of this year-long ethnographic research. This study considered the influence of the law on two elementary schools in a rural district that allowed each to choose how it would implement Proposition 227. The schools reacted to Proposition 227 in very different ways. One school pursued parental waivers and continued its bilingual program, while the second school embraced the English Only provisions outlined Proposition 227.

Data collected from classroom observations, teacher meetings, and interviews were used to examine the connection between the implementation decisions made at the district and school level and the local enactment of classroom literacy practice. Through detailed examinations of two teachers at each school, this research explored the connection between their individual qualities—their reasons for entering the field of teaching, educational history, and political ideology—and their translation of policy to classroom practice.

The study found that the individual qualities of teachers played a large role in negotiation of the mandates of Proposition 227, and that Proposition 227 implementation did little to assist teachers in resolving instructional dilemmas related to the education of English learners.

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## COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH GRANT

The UC LMRI Faculty Steering Committee awarded an additional \$25,000 collaborative research grant for 2001-02:

### Relationships Among Literacy and Cognitive Functioning Measures in Monolingual and Bilingual Children At or Not At Risk for Learning Disabilities

H. LEE SWANSON, UC RIVERSIDE.  
MICHAEL GERBER, UC SANTA BARBARA

The purpose of this pilot research is to compare cognitive function and literacy in monolingual and bilingual children at risk for learning disabilities (LD) in Kindergarten and the First grade. The proposed sample includes children who are monolingual (English only), bilingual (Spanish-English) or who speak Spanish and are learning English as a second language. We are particularly interested in testing the hypothesis that development of phonological processes constrains reading performance in both monolingual and bilingual children *at risk* for LD. We investigate whether monolingual and bilingual children at risk for LD share a common phonological core problem. We also determine the various levels of cognitive processes that supplement or constrain phonological processing. The additional cognitive processes under investigation relate to orthographic, lexical, semantic, and working memory skills. We determine if the cognitive processes measured in this sample operate within the child’s primary language [i.e., the asymmetry model of bilingual representation—the first language (L1) is closely tied to an underlying cognitive structure, whereas the second language (L2) is merely associated with their L1 equivalents] or reflect operations within the second language system.

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## CALL FOR PROPOSALS

### UC MEXUS CONACYT

Advanced Network Services Applications  
Collaborative Grants in Research, Education, & Technology for  
Teams of UC and Mexican Reserachers

- and -

### UC MEXUS-CONACYT-CICESE

Colorado River Delta & Upper Gulf of California Grants for  
Collaborative Projects

Deadline for receipt of proposals: **July 2, 2001**

For additional information contact Andrea Kaus, Ph.D., Program  
Officer: [andrea.kaus@ucr.edu](mailto:andrea.kaus@ucr.edu)

UC MEXUS website: [www.ucr.edu/ucmexus/index.htm](http://www.ucr.edu/ucmexus/index.htm)

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## CONFERENCES

**AUGUST 13, 2001**

Sacramento Convention Center

*"Working Together to Implement Standards-Based Practices  
Within and Across Grade Spans, Preschool-12"*

A one-day preconference co-sponsored by the California Elementary  
Education Network. Registration through the on-line registration  
site with the CDE Conference Planning Office: [ElemNet@cde.ca.gov](mailto:ElemNet@cde.ca.gov)

**NOVEMBER 16-18, 2001**

University of California, Santa Barbara

*Rethinking the SAT in University Admissions*

The First Conference on Outreach-Related Policy Issues. Sponsored by the Center for Faculty Outreach, in conjunction with the Committee on Admissions and Enrollment.

**APRIL 28-MAY 2, 2002**

San Francisco

*"Gateway to Global Understanding"*

International Reading Association's 47th Annual Convention. For more information: [www.reading.org](http://www.reading.org)

**PUBLICATIONS****Implementation of California's Proposition 227: 1998-2000**

Special Issue of the *Bilingual Research Journal*  
(Winter & Spring 2000)

Proposition 227, passed by a 61% majority of California voters on June 2, 1998—severely restricted the use of primary language for instructional purposes, and instead provided a transitional program of "structured English immersion" that was not normally to last more than one year. This special issue of the *Bilingual Research Journal* contains a number of research papers that examine the impact of 227 in the first two years of its implementation. The journal is available at: <http://brj.asu.edu/>

**The Slowing Progress of Immigrants:  
An Examination of Income, Home Ownership, and Citizenship,  
1970-2000**

Steven A. Camarota

America's immigrant population has tripled since 1970 to about 30 million and, as newly released results of the 2000 Census have shown, the nation's population has become increasingly diverse. This new report from the Center for Immigration Studies finds that over the last thirty years each successive wave of immigrants has fared worse than the one that preceded it. Today's established immigrants (those who have lived in the country between 10 and 20 years), are much poorer, less likely to be homeowners, and less likely to have become citizens than established immigrants in the past. The complete report is available at: <http://www.cis.org/articles/2001/back401release.html>

**The Texas Education Review**

The Texas Education Review is a new quarterly scholarly journal providing a forum for the discussion of primary, secondary, and higher education issues confronting Texas and the nation. Articles from the latest issue, including one entitled, "Bilingual Education's Unlamented Demise" by Robert Holland & Don Soifer, are available at: [www.texaseducationreview.com](http://www.texaseducationreview.com)

**Coming in January 2002:**

The **JOURNAL OF LATINOS AND EDUCATION (JLE)** provides a forum for scholars and writers from diverse disciplines who share a common interest in educational issues impacting Latinos. Policies and practices promoting social justice for linguistically and culturally diverse groups are particularly welcomed for consideration. Enrique G. Murillo, Jr., Ph.D., Editor. College of Education, Center for Equity in Education, California State University San Bernardino. E-mail: [emurillo@csusb.edu](mailto:emurillo@csusb.edu)

**UC LMRI 2001 CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS**

The Fourteenth Annual UC LMRI Conference was held May 4-5 at UCLA's Tom Bradley International Hall in Los Angeles, California. The topic for this year was "Developing (Bi-)Literacy." Featured Keynote Speakers were Ron Schmidt and Luis Moll. Approximately 100 attendees enjoyed the two day conference, which included eight sessions, two panels and two keynote addresses.

The first keynote speaker, Ron Schmidt of California State University, Long Beach, addressed the topic of "The Politics of Language in the Era of Proposition 227". His presentation provided an assessment of the political situation facing proponents of bilingualism and biliteracy in the era of Proposition 227, drawing from and building on the analysis in his book, *Language Policy and Identity Politics in the United States* (Temple University Press, 2000).



On Saturday afternoon, Luis Moll of the University of Arizona, gave his keynote address topic on "Exploring Biliteracy and Beyond: Developing a Case Example of Educational Sovereignty." He presented a summary of an on-going longitudinal study that

addresses two goals: (1) the development of biliteracy of a cohort of children with different social class, cultural, and language characteristics, tracing the students' different trajectories as they become literate in Spanish and English; (2) the study of language ideologies, in part, as manifested in adults and

children's discourses, and how these ideologies come to mediate the schooling process.

He also discussed how the school represents a case example of "educational sovereignty", as it collectively manages to provide "additive" schooling in two languages despite political pressures to the contrary.

Other conference highlights included:

- Several panels on the development of biliteracy;
- Presentations by five UC LMRI dissertation grant recipients: Eunai Park (UC Santa Barbara), Robert Ream (UC Santa Barbara), Tom Stritikus (UC Berkeley), Clayton Hurd (UC Santa Cruz), Iliana Reyes (UC Berkeley), and Barbara Conboy (UC San Diego);
- A panel on the impact of Proposition 227;
- A panel on the difficulty of acquiring academic English in secondary schools.

A complete list of the presentations can be found on the conference website at: <http://lmri.ucsb.edu/ProfDev/2001%20Conference/program.htm>



### UC Staff Appointments

The UC LMRI welcomes Beverly Bavaro as its new Publications Editor/Administrative Assistant. Beverly spent the last year at Vandenberg Air Force Base with MCA Engineers Launch Operations & Support Contract Secretary. Previously, as their Technical administrative Secretary. Previously, she worked in an administrative capacity at The University of Texas at Austin, first for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women, and then for Applied Research Labs/Signal Physics. She was also Managing Editor and writer for several years for INsite magazine, an entertainment journal (similar to Santa Barbara's *Independent*). Beverly is a native Californian, born in San Francisco, and has family in Santa Maria and San Diego.



**UC LMRI 2001  
CALL FOR GRANT PROPOSALS**

- Small Research Grants  
Due **October 1, 2001** for UC Researchers
- Dissertation Research Grants  
Due **October 1, 2001** for UC Graduate Students

Complete grant information and applications can be found on the UC LMRI website at: <http://lmri.ucsb.edu>

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