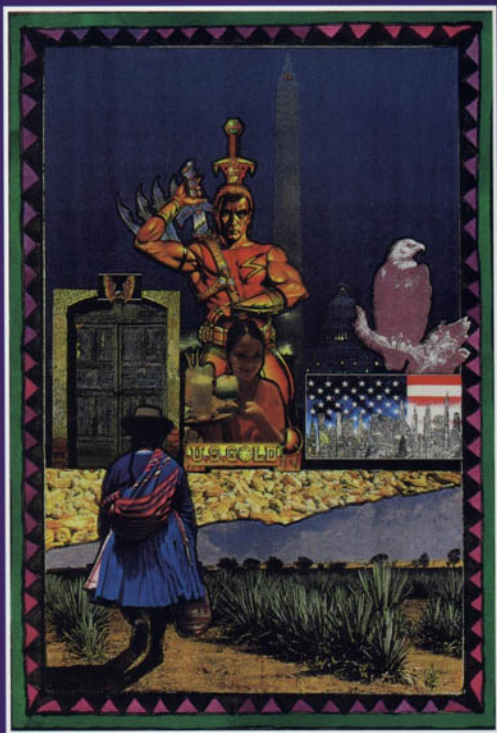


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At War with Diversity

US Language Policy in an Age of Anxiety



James Crawford

At War With Diversity

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US Language Policy in an Age of Anxiety

James Crawford

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Introduction

*America's profusion of tongues has made her
a modern Babel, but a Babel in reverse.*

Einar Haugen (1972)

Language need not be a polarizing issue. In the United States, it rarely has been – certainly as compared with race, class, or religion. Given the right conditions, however, the politics of language can be just as visceral. In the last two decades, these conditions have included:

- an increase in immigration, mainly from Asia and Latin America, transforming the life of numerous communities, linguistically and otherwise;
- a backlash against the civil-rights gains of the 1960s and 1970s, leading to an emphasis on cultural and symbolic politics;
- an organized movement to limit the new 'bilingualism' by promoting English-only laws in the name of national unity; and
- politicians seeking 'wedge issues' to exploit for partisan purposes.

Americans have had relatively limited experience with conflicts over language. For most of our history, the hegemony of English seemed self-evident. Seldom did anyone perceive a threat from other tongues. Language diversity was often tolerated, occasionally repressed; mostly it was taken for granted. The US government hardly ever saw a need for legislation, or any other action, to regulate language usage. Its standard policy was to have *no policy* on language, explicitly defined and national in scope. States and localities were more likely to act in this area, sometimes to refuse but frequently to provide accommodations, such as bilingual instruction in public schools.

This history had less to do with any ideological 'tradition' on language than with the social phenomenon of 'Babel in reverse.' Like no other nation, the United States has exhibited a power to attract diverse peoples and to acculturate them rapidly. Contrary to myth, however, the process was not as simple as *e pluribus unum*. As fast as immigrant tongues were depleted, generally by the third generation, they were replenished by new arrivals. Non-English-speaking groups continued

to expand, and continued to be anglicized, largely without coercion from authorities. Pressure to speak English did feature in a campaign to 'Americanize the immigrant' in the early 1900s, but such episodes were the exception. As a result, language differences were rarely a source of division. When conflicts erupted, they usually involved repressive measures by government, such as the imposition of English-only rules in the classroom. For the most part, these policies were aimed at indigenous and conquered peoples, and their purpose was social control, not social integration. Anti-immigrant politics primarily took other forms – that is, until the 1980s.

So what has changed? Why has a movement emerged for the 'legal protection of English' and the legal restriction of other languages? Why have politicians encouraged this campaign and the attitudes it conveys? What does Official English legislation portend for minority rights and opportunities? What are its implications for efforts to save Native American languages from extinction? How will political assaults on bilingual education affect children who come to school speaking limited English? How should fair-minded Americans, especially educational practitioners and researchers, respond to such developments?

These questions have commanded my attention, not to mention fascination, since I went to work for *Education Week* back in 1985 and began to write about bilingual education. Over the years I have approached them from several vantage points. *Hold Your Tongue* (1992a) offers a journalistic account of the English-only movement and its impact in diverse communities. *Language Loyalties* (1992b) is a collection of essays and source materials on language policy in general and the English-only question in particular. *Bilingual Education* (4th edn, 1999) provides an overview of schooling for English learners, emphasizing issues of interest to educators.

This volume attempts a more direct and analytical approach. The articles collected here were written at different times, focusing on different problems of US language policy. But in one way or another, they all seek to address the overriding question: How should Americans respond to language diversity? There are three basic alternatives. We could continue dealing with diversity as a minor irritant, to be remedied when necessary on an *ad hoc* basis. Or we could treat it as a threat to the nation's harmony and prosperity, to be stamped out through English-only mandates. Or we could recognize it as cultural asset, a reservoir of potentially valuable skills, and a matter of human rights, to be encouraged and defended. Whether one relishes or despises diversity – or could care less – is a personal value judgment. Like it or not, however, bilingualism is a reality. The United States needs a coherent policy for managing its costs and benefits.

To understand what is at stake in these decisions, a historical perspec-

tive is essential. 'Anatomy of the English-Only Movement' considers the social and ideological sources of language restrictionism, from colonial times until the present. 'Boom to Bust: Official English in the 1990s' traces the campaign's recent advances and setbacks, with special emphasis to its legislative agenda.

Because bilingualism is typically framed as an 'immigrant issue,' the situation of indigenous peoples tends to be ignored. 'Endangered Native American Languages: What Is To Be Done, and Why?' outlines the crisis facing communities whose linguistic and cultural resources are eroding. 'Seven Hypotheses on Language Loss' describes efforts among several Indian tribes to reverse this trend and preserve their heritage while overcoming a host of practical obstacles.

Those most affected by today's language conflicts are among society's most vulnerable members: minority children learning English. 'The Political Paradox of Bilingual Education' analyzes the decline in support for native-language instruction even as such pedagogies were perfected and institutionalized. 'The Proposition 227 Campaign: A Post Mortem' examines the most serious defeat for bilingual education to date, the political tactics of its enemies, and the mistakes of its advocates.

Of course, most educators would prefer to avoid politics, an understandable reaction to the prevailing cant and demagoguery. But as the English-only forces grow more sophisticated and better organized, this approach becomes untenable. Public misunderstanding is so pervasive about bilingual education, for example, that the program's future is at risk. Increasingly it is politics, not pedagogy, that determines how children are taught. Attention must be paid to the debates now raging over language, or the voices of equity and diversity could one day be silenced.

Anatomy of the English-only Movement

English-only activism seemed to come out of nowhere in the 1980s, a phenomenon that few living Americans had ever witnessed. Previously no one had warned that the nation's dominant language was endangered by the encroachment of other tongues – creeping bilingualism – or that it needed 'legal protection' in the United States. Suddenly there were legislative campaigns to give English official status, an idea never proposed at the federal level before 1981, and to restrict the public use of minority languages. Such Official English measures have now been adopted by twenty-three states.¹ In 1996, for the first time, Congress voted on and the House of Representatives approved a bill designating English as the federal government's sole language of official business.

Naturally the targets of this campaign – linguistic minorities, bilingual educators, civil libertarians, Indian tribes, and others – regard restrictionist legislation as a serious threat to their interests. Also not surprisingly, they have tended to characterize the English-only movement as a creature of the far right fringe of American politics, born of racial fear and loathing. Since the mid-1980s, when I started reporting on such groups and their activities, I have been asked whether they can be linked to identifiable villains such as the Ku Klux Klan or the American Nazi Party. Such connections would certainly be convenient for opponents. If the English-only campaign could be exposed as an extremist conspiracy, mobilizing against it would be a simple matter. Already this theme has featured in counter-attacks. For the most part, however, it is a product of wishful thinking.²

True, the language-restriction movement did grow directly out of the immigration-restriction movement, appealing to many of the same attitudes and followers. The immigration-restriction movement, in turn, has accepted support from eugenicists, Klan sympathizers, and other defenders of white supremacy (Crawford, 1992a). Unsavory associations, to be sure. As we shall see, these links have raised questions about the hidden agenda of Official English. And rightly so. Yet I have uncovered no evidence that groups promoting this campaign follow the leadership or share the ideology of racial extremists.

As I usually tell those who call to inquire about the 'Nazi connection,' I have found some ties that, to me, are far more alarming. The founder of the English-only movement was formerly a national leader in liberal groups including the Sierra Club, Planned Parenthood, and Zero Population Growth. His organization, US English, has won the endorsement of luminaries across the political spectrum. Assorted bedfellows for the cause include former Senator Eugene McCarthy and former President Richard Nixon; literary figures Saul Bellow, Norman Cousins, and Gore Vidal; actors Whoopi Goldberg, Charleton Heston, and Arnold Schwarzenegger; public broadcasting personalities Julia Child and Alistair Cooke; and journalist Walter Cronkite, once dubbed 'the most trusted man in America.'³

Reality must be faced: today's anti-bilingual current is a mainstream phenomenon. How deep it runs and what it signifies are more complex questions. When Americans are asked simply, 'Should English be the official language?' the idea seems extremely popular. Variations on the proposal have received 60–90 percent approval in opinion polls and ballot boxes. This pattern has held true across every demographic category – age, sex, income, education level, political, and ideological affiliation – except for ethnicity. Latinos have been the most consistent opponents of these measures, although even their views have sometimes wavered (Schmid, 1992). On the other hand, when pollsters ask whether government should restrict minority language use or terminate bilingual services to those who depend on them, support for English-only policies falls off significantly.⁴ It appears that declarations about the primacy of English are more broadly endorsed than edicts to enforce it.

While Congressional sponsors of Official English have usually been conservatives, the legislation has found enthusiastic champions and opponents on both sides of the aisle. Seldom did it function as a partisan issue before the so-called Republican Revolution of 1994, when the new majority began to stress bilingualism as a wedge issue to divide Democratic constituencies. The new House leadership pushed through a measure that largely prohibited the use of languages other than English by the federal government. In response, breaking his long silence on English-only legislation, President Clinton threatened a veto, and the bill died without Senate action (*see pp. 31–51*).

The English-only Debate

Of course, a mainstream idea is not necessarily a rational one, free of prejudice and paranoia. The campaign to 'officialize' English in the United States rests on the absurd claim that the most successful and domi-

nant world language in history is under siege in its strongest bastion. Proponents argue that:

- English has always been our 'social glue,' our most important 'common bond,' which has allowed Americans of diverse backgrounds to understand each other and overcome differences (a notion seductive to liberals).
- Today's immigrants refuse to learn English, unlike the good old immigrants of yesteryear (flattery for Euro-ethnics), and are discouraged from doing so by government-sponsored bilingual programs.
- Languages are best learned in a situation that forces one to do so – where there's no escape from brutal necessity – unlike the situation in a bilingual classroom (reflexive appeal for 'social issue' conservatives).
- Ethnic leaders are promoting bilingualism for selfish ends: to provide jobs for their constituents and keep them dependent by discouraging them from learning English (courting the Hispanophobes).
- Language diversity inevitably leads to language conflict, ethnic hostility, and political separatism *à la Québec* (playing to paranoia of all stripes).

Virtually no evidence has been produced on behalf of any of these propositions, all of which are demonstrably false. But in this strange debate, factual support has generally proved unnecessary for English-only proponents to advance their cause. The facts are that, except in isolated locales, immigrants to the United States have typically lost their native languages by the third generation. Historically they have shown an almost gravitational attraction toward English, and there are no signs that this proclivity has changed. To the contrary, recent demographic data analyzed by Veltman (1983, 1988) indicate that rates of *anglicization* – shift to English as the usual language – are steadily increasing. They now approach or surpass a two-generation pattern among all immigrant groups, including Spanish-speakers, who are most often stigmatized as resistant to English.

Language has seldom functioned as a symbolic identifier in the United States, as an emblem of national pride or a badge of exclusivity. America's founders generally espoused an ideological brand of nationalism that stressed agreement on democratic principles rather than bonds of ethnicity (Morris, 1987; Heath, 1992). Exceptions to this pattern have occurred, first, when attempts were made to differentiate American English from the dialect of the mother country (usually a preoccupation of literati); and second, when language restrictions served as a surrogate

for other goals, such as religious intolerance, economic advantage, political repression, or racial discrimination.

About 175 indigenous languages survive in the United States today, according to the best documented estimate (Krauss, 1996), perhaps half the number spoken when Europeans first arrived. Yet only about twenty of these are still being learned by children. Absent an ambitious effort to preserve them, the rest seem doomed to extinction within two or three generations. These are the truly threatened languages in the United States today (*see pp.* 52–65, 66–83).

Meanwhile, speakers of immigrant languages are on the increase, owing to relatively high levels of immigration.⁵ But according to the 1990 census, 97 percent of US residents speak English ‘well’ or ‘very well.’ Only 0.8 of one percent speak no English at all, as compared with 3.6 percent in 1890, when the efficiency of counting immigrant populations was far inferior to today’s. Proportionally speaking, 4.5 times as many Americans were non-English-speakers a century ago, when schooling in languages other than English was, if anything, more common.

Research on second-language acquisition has increasingly showcased the academic benefits of bilingual instruction. Indeed, when language-minority students fail, it is more likely from too little instruction in their native language than too little English. A long-term national study (Ramírez *et al.*, 1991) has documented higher student achievement in *developmental bilingual* classrooms than in *transitional bilingual* or *structured English immersion* classrooms. Admittedly, such findings are counter-intuitive and poorly understood by a majority of the public. But this hardly explains the vehemence of the opposition, which typically has more to do with political than pedagogical considerations.

Finally, there is no evidence whatsoever of linguistic separatism. Unlike Canada and numerous other countries, the United States has no political parties organized along ethnic lines. Minority politicians and advocacy groups generally pursue an agenda of expanding their constituents’ access to, and advancement within, American society.

Why, then, are there growing worries about the erosion of English as our common language? What drives the demands for English-only mandates covering most federal and state government functions? Whence the unprecedented claims that English is the major unifying force among Americans and that, unless we protect it, we could soon face turmoil among warring groups? Where do fears about ethnic and linguistic separatism originate?

Such ideas are hardly restricted to marginal followers; they are propagated by the leaders of the English-only movement. Former Senator Steve Symms of Idaho (1983: S 12643), in introducing a constitutional English

Language Amendment, warned that 'countless hundreds of thousands have lost their lives in the language riots of India. Real potential exists for a similar situation to be replayed in the United States.' Linda Chávez (1995), conservative pundit and one-time president of US English, accused bilingual educators of seeking the retrocession of the south-western United States to Mexico. The late semanticist S.I. Hayakawa, the movement's elder statesman, never tired of quoting Theodore Roosevelt at his most intolerant: 'We have room for but one language in this country, and that is the English language, for we intend to see that the crucible turns our people out as Americans, of American nationality, and not as dwellers in a polyglot boarding-house' ([1919] 1926: XXIV, 554).

English-only arguments are so value-laden in their distaste for diversity, so crude in their analogies with other nations, so credulous about the power of social engineering, and so bereft of factual evidence that they are difficult to take seriously. Indeed, it is hard to find in the literature an intellectually coherent statement of the case for Official English legislation – as I learned in compiling an anthology on the subject (Crawford, 1992b).

What is really going on here? What do English-only advocates hope to gain from this campaign? What are its social and ideological roots? Does its popularity stem primarily from ethnocentrism, a (mostly) white backlash against immigrants from the Third World? Or primarily from a conception of 'American identity' that happens to differ from that of linguistic minorities?

After tracing voting patterns, attitude surveys, and legislative debates, social scientists remain divided over these questions. Schmid (1996) favors the former explanation, citing an 'ideology of exclusion' that manifests itself in 'a symbolic clash between a dominant and minority culture' (p. 54). Other factors driving the English-only movement include 'the perceived costs' of newcomers in increased welfare and unemployment, anxieties about cultural change, and 'the ascendancy of anti-immigrant organizations' (p. 63). By contrast, Citrin *et al.* (1990) characterize the English-only movement as essentially a nationalist phenomenon. 'Without denying the role played by anti-minority sentiments,' they argue, support for Official English mainly reflects a 'positive attachment to the symbols of nationhood' – in particular, 'the consensual belief that the English language is and should remain a defining characteristic of American society' (p. 549).

No doubt both conclusions are supportable on the basis of opinion polls, which reveal varied and contradictory attitudes on this issue. Yet the English-only movement cannot be clearly understood without looking beyond what its followers say about their beliefs and intentions.⁶

To discover the sources of English-only ideology, it is necessary to probe the underlying causes and uses of language restrictionism. In advancing my own answers to these questions, I will begin by reviewing the historical precedents that exist for language conflicts in the United States as they involve both immigrants and colonized peoples, and then draw on these themes in analyzing our contemporary language politics.

Historic Patterns of Language Conflict

First, a word of caution. Historical authority has been much abused in the English-only debate, as partisans try to buttress their positions, pro or con, by citing 'traditions' of linguistic uniformity or diversity, ethnic assimilation or separatism, cultural intolerance or libertarianism. Since contradictory traditions have flourished, ample evidence can be marshaled to support, or debunk, any of these interpretations. Despite their differences, partisans on both sides tend to share a fundamentally *ahistorical* approach to language policy. They rely on free-floating ideologies (the melting pot, racism, 'linguicism') rather than on social, economic, or political factors to explain events. In fact, there has been little ideological consistency in responses toward minority languages in the United States. Policies have ranged from repression to restriction to tolerance to accommodation, depending on forces that usually have little to do with language.

Ideologies, which take on an autonomous life of their own, do play a significant causal role in intergroup conflicts. Yet it must be remembered that conceptions of race, ethnicity, and language are hardly universal, transcending time and circumstance. They are socially constructed. How we think about them is grounded in material realities – demographic patterns, political alignments, economic conditions – which are ever changing. Terms like *bilingualism* and *language minority* have acquired special meanings over the past two decades in the context of increased immigration and its transformation of once-homogeneous communities. Ethnocentrism took different forms in the 19th century, when few Americans would have thought of Norwegian homesteaders, Chinese contract laborers, Italian textile workers, New Mexican vaqueros, and Lakota warriors as a single class defined by their limited English skills. Attitudes and policies toward these groups varied significantly, depending on their numbers, political power, economic status, territorial position, land ownership, military prowess, 'racial' distinctiveness, and a host of other traits. Especially in the case of language, a secondary theme in US ethnic conflicts, generalizations about an American tradition – whether bilingual or 'unilingual' – become meaningless.

Where historical analysis is valuable is in exposing the forces at work in shaping language attitudes and language policy. While each of these instances is unique, a product of its own period and place, taken together they exhibit significant parallels. Thus history can provide a kind of depth perception in viewing today's English-only phenomenon – an approach that analyzes language politics in its social context and highlights its interdependence with non-linguistic factors. Along these lines, I will advance the following hypothesis:

Language conflicts generally incorporate symbolic struggles over cultural, religious, ethnic, or national identity. Yet they represent more than contending philosophies of assimilation and pluralism, disagreements about the rights and responsibilities of citizens, or debates over the true meaning of 'Americanism.' Ultimately language politics are determined by material interests – struggles for social and economic supremacy – which normally lurk beneath the surface of the public debate.

In the American experience, English-only campaigns can be classed in two categories: as proxies for intergroup competition and as mechanisms of social control. Discrimination against minority language speakers can serve both as a means of privileging certain groups over others and as a tool for maintaining the hegemony of ruling elites. As numerous commentators have noted, racism and nativism – in particular, Hispanophobia – have featured prominently in the (not so well) hidden agenda of organizations like US English. Less obvious is the potential of language restrictionism to advance material interests, that is, to serve as a continuation of class warfare by other means. Of course, not all language battles involve direct struggles *between* classes. Some flare within classes, pitting capitalists against capitalists or workers against workers, across ethnic lines. Such conflicts may appear to be purely 'symbolic,' and yet the stakes involved are quite real: resources, power, and status. A second category of language politics functions to strengthen (or challenge) class domination, colonial rule, or military occupation. These include crusades of linguistic repression waged in the name of 'civilizing the Indian' or 'Americanizing the immigrant.'

In sum, language restrictionism has been diverse in its causes, effects, and ideological justifications. But it never occurs independently of the material forces that govern US history, as can be seen in the following sketches.

Pennsylvania Germans

One of the earliest English-only campaigns erupted in colonial Pennsylvania, a scene of feverish ethnic rivalry. No less a figure than Benjamin

Franklin circulated pamphlets expressing alarm that German settlers, now representing a third of the colony's population, were failing to learn the language of their English neighbors. 'Great disorders and inconveniences may one day arise among us,' he warned, unless the Germans could be assimilated:

Those who come hither are generally of the most ignorant Stupid Sort of their own Nation, and as Ignorance is often attended with Credulity when Knavery would mislead it, and with Suspicion when Honesty would set it right; and as few of the English understand the German Language, and so cannot address them either from the Press or Pulpit, 'tis almost impossible to remove any prejudices they once entertain. (Franklin, [1753] 1961: IV, 483–484)

Public uses of German, he added, such as advertisements, newspapers, street signs, legal contracts, and court interpreters, only made the situation worse. Concerned that 'few of their children in the Country learn English' (IV, 484) – most were being educated in German – Franklin helped to establish a network of English-language schools under the guise of providing religious instruction. German parents were initially enthusiastic, but when the assimilationist purpose of these 'charity schools' was revealed, they refused to send their children (Bell, 1955).

Franklin's appeals for linguistic unity may have sounded high-minded to his friends, but they had a distinctly practical purpose. With German immigrants arriving at the rate of 7000 a year, bringing with them numerous religious sects, he feared for English hegemony in Pennsylvania: 'Unless the stream of their importation could be turned from this to other Colonies ... they will soon so out number us, that all the advantages we have will not in My Opinion be able to preserve our language, and even our Government will become precarious' (IV, 484–485). In a more incendiary tract, he added:

[W]hy should the Palatine Boors be suffered to swarm into our Settlements, and by herding together, establish their Language and Manners, to the Exclusion of ours? Why should Pennsylvania, founded by the English, become a Colony of *Aliens*, who will shortly be so numerous as to Germanize us instead of our Anglifying them, and will never adopt our Language or Customs, any more than they can acquire our Complexion.' (IV, 234; emphasis in original)

Franklin spoke for Englishmen of property like himself, who envisioned a day when Pennsylvania Germans would gain the upper hand through exclusive markets and political favoritism. This was a self-interested businessman talking, one who had published the first German-language news-

paper in the Americas, as well as the first German-language Bible, only to lose this trade as better-qualified German printers arrived. He also spoke as a politician who resented the Germans' pacifism and reluctance to pay for Indian wars on the frontier (Weaver, 1970), viewing these tendencies as barriers to the colony's growth.

Franklin's intemperate writings backfired when the 'Palatine Boors' mobilized to vote him out of the colonial assembly in 1764. But his attitudes changed late in life, with a change in Pennsylvania's political alignments following the American Revolution. Franklin's chief opponents were now radicals who opposed a centralized form of government; German Americans were potential allies. Not coincidentally, he came to support Benjamin Rush in advocating a publicly funded experiment in bilingual higher education. This was advertised as a way to 'open the eyes of the Germans to the importance and utility of the English language and become perhaps the *only possible means*, consistent with their liberty, of spreading a knowledge of the English language among them' (Rush, [1785] 1951: I, 366; emphasis in original). Thus, in 1787, Franklin became a benefactor and namesake of Franklin and Marshall College. He espoused a different – though equally 'principled' – position on the language question, now embracing rather than condemning diversity. Meanwhile, he successfully courted the Germans' support for Federalism.

Louisianans

For the United States, the Louisiana Purchase of 1803 posed an early test of the nation's commitment to its founding principles. Would democracy be extended without reservation to cultural and linguistic minorities? Would President Jefferson honor his own rhetoric about 'unalienable rights'? Apparently not. His policy toward the Louisiana Territory illustrates a classic choice of expediency over principle.

Rather than extend representative democracy, as Louisianans had anticipated, Jefferson ruled out local elections and vested most authority in a colonial governor unable to speak the language of most inhabitants. On arriving in New Orleans, the official decreed that all public affairs would henceforth be transacted in English instead of French. The result was to create substantial advantages for the 15 percent minority of Anglo-American planters and entrepreneurs, and to provoke an outcry from the francophones. Mass meetings were held and a manifesto known as the Louisiana Remonstrance was drafted, enumerating the grievances of property owners over linguistic and economic discrimination. An embarrassed Jefferson retreated quickly, ordering his governor to rescind the English-only policy. He also supported the election of local officials and promised to grant Louisiana statehood after its free population

reached 60,000. Simultaneously, however, the president sought to tip the ethnic balance by paying an English-speaking 'frontier militia' to settle there; Congress refused to fund the plan (Newton, 1980).

Thus Louisiana entered the Union in 1812 as the first – and last – state with a non-anglophone majority. Congress required it to adopt a constitution specifying that all laws and official records be published in the language 'in which the Constitution of the United States is written.' But this was far from an English-only requirement, and French continued to be used extensively in state government. Louisiana's second governor, Jacques Villeré (1816–1820), had no choice in the matter, since he spoke no English. As ethnic rivalries weakened among the propertied classes, along with the hold of the French language, anglophones were inclined to be magnanimous. Louisiana's 1845 constitution guaranteed that the legislature would continue to operate bilingually, which it did until the Civil War. An 1847 law authorized French–English instruction in public schools. But the Radical Republican constitutions imposed by Union troops in 1864 and 1868 abolished French language rights, as a way of punishing francophones for their support of the Confederacy. At the end of Reconstruction, when Democrats returned to power, the 1879 constitution restored several types of official status for French; these remained in force until 1921 (Kloss, 1998).

As in Pennsylvania, linguistic tolerance tended to prevail in Louisiana as, after some initial friction, ethnic elites came to an accommodation with each other. The general result was to foster assimilation. By the early 20th century, French thrived only in the dialects of backwoods Cajuns and Creoles, just as German in Pennsylvania was confined mainly to religious communities such as the Amish.

Californios

Under similar circumstances, Spanish speakers in California experienced an entirely different fate. This conquered group, representing a slight majority of the population at the end of the Mexican–American War, was initially treated with respect by Anglo elites, who had often intermarried with the local population and learned its vernacular. The 1849 constitution recognized Spanish language rights, including a guarantee for the bilingual publication of state laws. By the following year, however, the *Californios'* political status plummeted as the Gold Rush made them a minority of about 15 percent. Experienced Spanish-speaking miners, especially from Mexico and Peru, became targets for the animosity of fortune-seeking gringos. The state legislature began to pass so-called 'greaser laws,' along with a Foreign Miner's tax, to harass the Latin Americans. In 1855, the state officially discontinued Spanish-

language schooling (Leibowitz, 1969), although some localities ignored the decree.

Perhaps most damaging, the federal California Land Act of 1851 required all landowners to prove title to their holdings in English-language courts. Over the next generation, the Spanish-speaking gentry lost title to virtually all of the large *haciendas*, totaling 14 million acres, that they had held at the end of the Mexican–American War; 40 percent of these lands had to be sold simply to pay the fees of English-speaking lawyers (Pitt, 1966).

In 1878–79, the California constitution was rewritten under the influence of the nativist Workingmen’s Party. Not one of the 150-odd delegates came from a Spanish-language background. Among the amendments adopted by the convention was a sweeping English-only mandate: ‘All laws of the State of California, and all official writings, and the executive, legislative, and judicial proceedings shall be conducted, preserved, and published in no other than the English language’ (Crawford, 1992b: 52). No exceptions were allowed, despite pleas that the provision would wreak havoc with local government in Spanish-dominant areas such as Los Angeles County. A few delegates objected, citing the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which ended the Mexican–American War and guaranteed certain rights to the Spanish-speaking citizens thereby annexed into the United States; this seemed to imply a right to maintain the Spanish language without restriction. But the majority rejected this interpretation, as illustrated by the following exchange:

Mr Tinnin: Thirty years have elapsed since this portion of the country became a portion of the Government of the United States, and the different residents who were here at that time have had ample time to be conversant with the English language if they desired to do so. This is an English-speaking Government, and persons who are incapable of speaking the English language certainly are not competent to discharge public duties. We have here in the Capitol now tons and tons of documents published in Spanish for the benefit of foreigners.

Mr Rolfe: Do you call the native population of this State foreigners?

Mr Tinnin: They had ample time to learn the language. (Quoted in Crawford, 1992b: 53)

While this English-only provision was generally ignored (until finally dropped in 1966), it served a new symbolic purpose. There was no longer any significant *hacendado* class for Anglo elites to compete with. Instead, the effect was to divert working-class resentments in a safe, xenophobic direction, the main targets being Spanish- and Chinese-speakers⁸ who

competed with whites for low-level jobs. This exemplifies one of the earliest uses of English-only measures for purposes of social control: depriving a minority of its rights, thus reinforcing a sense of privilege among white workers and pre-empting the solidarity of labor.

American Indians

A more openly repressive approach can be found in the language policies directed at Native Americans beginning in the late 19th century. In earlier periods, Christian missionaries such as John Eliot of Massachusetts had learned indigenous vernaculars in order to proselytize their Gospel. Other missionaries established vernacular schools for Indian children, often with support from the federal government. But following the Civil War, as Indians resisted white expansion into the West, authorities began to rethink this language policy. The Indian Peace Commission of 1868 concluded that inculcating the ways of 'civilization' was the only way to pacify the warlike Plains tribes. As one means to that end, it recommended English-only schooling: 'Through sameness of language is produced sameness of sentiment, and thought; customs and habits are moulded and assimilated in the same way, and thus in process of time the differences producing trouble would have been gradually obliterated' (Atkins, 1887: 18).

Beginning in the 1880s, the US government began putting this philosophy into practice. It hired bounty hunters to round up Indian children and pack them off to boarding schools far from home – in effect, holding many of them hostage to ensure their tribes' 'good behavior.' Students were harshly punished when caught speaking indigenous tongues, practicing tribal religions, or participating in native ceremonies. The commissioner of Indian affairs explained the rationale:

[T]eaching an Indian youth in his own barbarous dialect is a positive detriment to him. The first step to be taken toward civilization, toward teaching the Indians the mischief and folly of continuing in their barbarous practices, is to teach them the English language. ... But it has been suggested that this order, being mandatory, gives a cruel blow to the sacred rights of the Indians. Is it cruelty to the Indian to force him to give up his scalping-knife and tomahawk? Is it cruelty to force him to abandon the vicious and barbarous sun dance, where he lacerates his flesh, and dances and tortures himself even unto death? Is it cruelty to the Indian to force him to have his daughters educated and married under the laws of the land, instead of selling them at a tender age for a stipulated price into concubinage to gratify the brutal lusts of ignorance and barbarism? (Atkins, 1887: 21–22)

He also cited nationalistic goals:

True Americans all feel that the Constitution, laws, and institutions of the United States, in their adaptation to the wants and requirements of man, are superior to those of any other country; and they should understand that by the spread of the English language will these laws and institutions be more firmly established and widely disseminated. Nothing so surely and perfectly stamps upon an individual a national characteristic as language. So manifest and important is this that nations the world over, in both ancient and modern times, have ever imposed the strictest requirements upon their public schools as to the teaching of the national tongue. (p. 19)

Thus the pretexts for imposing English on Native Americans pioneered a range of now familiar arguments. These included the need for a common language to help settle differences peaceably (sameness of language produces sameness of mind); the need to impose English on language minorities to further their best interests (civilizing the 'barbarous'); and the role of English as a patriotic symbol (spreading 'superior' American institutions). No doubt these explanations sounded plausible to the intended audience – Anglo-Americans, not Indians. But none could mask the prime objectives: military conquest, expropriation of Indian lands, and removal of unwanted peoples.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs enforced its regime of coercive anglicization, officially or unofficially, until the 1960s. While often ineffective in eradicating a child's language, it did instill a sense of shame that often resulted in the next generation being reared in English only. So its delayed effects are still being felt (*see pp. 67–70*).

Policies of linguistic genocide – that is, attempts to coerce language shift among subject peoples – have been largely ineffective in the near term. Colonized masses rarely learn the standard language of the colonizer. The few individuals who do so continue to face racial, cultural, or economic barriers to entering the wider society, not to mention rejection by their own peoples. Considering these persistent failures, one might ask why US officials have so doggedly promoted the assimilation of the colonized. The answer is that such policies have yielded substantial benefits to the colonizer. First has been the missionary-style gratification that comes from projects to bestow Western culture, religion, and political 'ideals' on purportedly backward natives (ungrateful though they may be). Such an ideology has served more than once to justify the exploitation of lands and resources, the denial of self-government, and the abrogation of civil rights – acts that otherwise contradict America's founding myths. Second, the cultural assault has served to demoralize

conquered peoples, cultivate dependency, and weaken their resistance to external domination.

Puerto Ricans

In an especially futile attempt at social engineering, US officials sponsored a fifty-year-long attempt to anglicize Puerto Rico through its educational system. Immediately after the Spanish–American War, English was declared ‘the official language of the school room’ throughout the island. In 1902, the US-appointed education commissioner candidly explained: ‘Colonization carried forward by the armies of war is vastly more costly than that carried forward by the armies of peace, whose outposts and garrisons are the public schools of the advancing nation’ (Negrón de Montilla, 1971: 62). Later apologists stressed the policy’s benefits to island residents: ‘English is the chief source, practically the only source, of democratic ideas in Porto Rico,’ asserted a report by the Brookings Institution (Clark *et al.*, 1930: 81). But democracy for Puerto Ricans – to the extent that meant self-determination over their own affairs – was hardly on Washington’s agenda.

As colonialism flowered, so did an ideology of Anglo-Saxon superiority. Senator Albert J. Beveridge of Indiana summed it up as follows:

God has not been preparing the English-speaking and Teutonic peoples for a thousand years for nothing but vain and idle self-contemplation. No! He has made us the master organizers of the world to establish system where chaos reigns. ... He has made us adepts in government that we may administer government among savages and senile peoples. (Bowers, 1932: 121)

Part of the racist call to duty was a mission of linguistic imperialism.

In Puerto Rico, variations of the English-instruction mandate were enforced by territorial officials, despite repeated protests from the insular legislature and strikes by students and teachers. Naturally the hated policy failed to make many inroads for English among Puerto Ricans. It did succeed, however, in depriving generations of children of a meaningful education; most instruction consisted of rote repetition of a language they had no opportunity to use outside the classroom. A 1925 study found that 84 percent of students dropped out by the end of the third grade (Osuna, 1949). Nevertheless, territorial governor Theodore Roosevelt, Jr, described the island’s American-style education system as ‘the greatest blessing ... within our gift. We could do no higher, or nobler work than to model these other people on ourselves’ (Steiner, 1974: 380).

In 1937, President Franklin Roosevelt appointed a new education

commissioner for Puerto Rico, with an admonition to intensify English instruction. After thirty-eight years of US rule, Roosevelt found it 'regrettable' that:

hundreds of thousands of Puerto Ricans have little and often virtually no knowledge of the English language. ... Only through the acquisition of this language will Puerto Rican Americans secure a better understanding of American ideals and principles. ... Puerto Rico is a densely populated Island. Many of its sons and daughters will desire to seek economic opportunity on the mainland. They will be greatly handicapped if they have not mastered English. ... [T]he American citizens of Puerto Rico should profit from their unique geographical situation and the unique historical circumstance which has brought to them the blessings of American citizenship by becoming bilingual. (Roosevelt, 1937: 160–161)

Such entreaties proved no more effective than the heavy-handed policy they sought to excuse. Few Puerto Ricans felt any need to learn English, except when forced to migrate north in search of work. But they did feel frustration about the schools' subordination of academic goals to an externally imposed language policy. One nationalist writer observed that, rather than becoming a fluent bilingual, the Puerto Rican student was more likely to become '*un tartamudo del pensamiento, un gago del espíritu,*' a stutterer in thought, a stammerer in spirit (Fernández Vanga, 1931: 84). In 1948, after Puerto Rico had won a measure of political autonomy, Spanish was finally restored as the basic language of instruction – over the objections of President Truman.

Native Hawaiians

The United States annexed the independent nation of Hawai'i in 1898, five years after US Marines were used in a coup to overthrow the Hawaiian monarchy. The cultural penetration of the islands had occurred decades earlier, via American missionaries and sugar planters. In the 1820s the missionaries developed an orthography for the Hawaiian language and began to translate religious texts and publish newspapers in the vernacular. Owing to mass enthusiasm among adults and a compulsory schooling law for children, by 1850 the great majority of Hawaiians were reportedly literate in their mother tongue (Kloss, 1998).

As Americans gained influence, however, and Hawaiian elites surrendered more land for plantations and more power to foreign appointees, there were pressures to anglicize the population. Hawai'i's superintendent of education, the Reverend Richard Armstrong, advocated the gradual replacement of Hawaiian with 'a better language ... what is now,

to a great extent, the business language of the Islands, and which would open to [the native child's] mind new and exhaustless treasures of moral and intellectual wealth' (Reinecke, 1969: 45). In 1853, English instruction was introduced for Hawaiian children. In 1896, it became the sole medium of public schooling, by decree of the so-called Republic of Hawaii, the colonial government-in-waiting (Huebner, 1985).

By that time, following the large-scale importation of immigrant labor by the sugar plantations – notably Japanese, Chinese, Portuguese, Puerto Ricans, Spanish, Koreans, and Filipinos – full-blooded Hawaiians had been reduced to less than 20 percent of the population. Hawaiian Pidgin English (HPE) flowered in response to the communication needs of these diverse groups, an unstable medium that grafted Hawaiian and English words onto each speaker's native grammar (Sato, 1985). Children then developed HPE into Hawaiian Creole English (HCE), a fully expressive language, which in practice became the vernacular of most Hawaiian schools in the early 20th century.

This situation provoked complaints from *haole* (white anglophone) parents, a small but influential minority who wanted their children educated in standard English, without the 'corrupting influences' of HPE and HCE speakers – that is, the offspring of plantation laborers (Stueber, 1981: 27). Adopting a recommendation by the federal Bureau of Education, in 1920 the Territory of Hawaii established a two-tier system in which students were ostensibly assigned to schools on the basis of English proficiency. In practice, this meant racial segregation, with haoles assigned to 'English standard schools' and non-whites to other public schools. By the time this discriminatory system was dismantled in the 1950s, language had become an especially salient

marker of socioeconomic status in Hawaiian society. Being labeled a 'Pidgin' [HCE] speaker was considered by many a liability in the job market, associated as it was with the plantation and with the minimal intelligence assumed necessary for manual labor. ... [A]s the middle class's identity with [standard English] developed, so the working class's alienation from it increased. More than ever before, HCE came to delineate class as well as ethnic differences among the people of Hawaii. (Sato, 1985: 265)

Meanwhile, the Hawaiian language continued to decline, along with all but the most recently imported immigrant tongues. Again, despite its assimilationist trappings, the colonial language policy served to reinforce rather than dismantle social inequality.

European Immigrants

White immigrants to the United States in general, and German speakers in particular, met with far more tolerance, linguistic and otherwise, than conquered peoples. During the 18th and 19th centuries, many settled in rural enclaves and ran their own affairs, including non-English schools in many cases; rarely were they subjected to language restrictions. Indeed, these groups were frequently accommodated. In 1839, Ohio became the first of several states to pass laws authorizing German-English instruction where parents requested it. This statute became the model for Louisiana's 1847 law, which simply substituted 'French' for 'German.' With or without state authorization, public schools used numerous immigrant vernaculars as mediums of instruction, including Dutch, Danish, Swedish, Norwegian, Polish, Italian, and Czech (Kloss, 1998).

This pattern began to change in the late 1880s, when Wisconsin and Illinois passed English-only instruction laws for both public and parochial schools. The legislation was inspired by an anti-Catholic secret society known as the American Protective Association. Unintentionally it united Lutherans as well as Catholics in opposition – both ran sectarian, German-language schools – and their combined outcry was intense. German-speaking Civil War heroes stepped forward to testify that Americanism did not imply anglicization. The Republican Party, which had heavily promoted these laws, lost nearly every state and federal office in the next election. Incoming Democrats soon repealed the English-only statutes. Elsewhere language restrictions were enacted in response to pressures from native laborers who resented the competition of foreigners (especially when used as strike-breakers). In 1897, for example, Pennsylvania imposed an English-speaking requirement for coal miners, a measure designed to exclude Italians and Hungarians.

The major push for Anglo-conformity came in the first two decades of the 20th century, as capitalists began to fear the revolutionary potential of immigrant workers, as exemplified in the Lawrence, Massachusetts, textile strike of 1912. The Industrial Workers of the World emerged victorious by overcoming ethnic divisions; strike meetings were translated in up to twenty languages (Boyer and Morais, 1955). Meanwhile, city dwellers reacted with growing alarm to the poverty and exotic customs of the 'new immigrant' groups, now increasingly diverse and coming especially from eastern and southern Europe. Settlement houses and service organizations like the Young Men's Christian Association began working to improve immigrants' conditions. One impor-

tant form of assistance, also supported by progressive states like Massachusetts, was to establish evening classes in English for adults and out-of-school youth.

Gradually, however, efforts to encourage assimilation became more coercive and overbearing. Frances Kellor (1916), an early organizer for what became known as the Americanization campaign, argued that anglicization could provide an antidote for labor unrest: 'Strikes and plots that have been fostered and developed by un-American agitators and foreign propaganda are not easily carried on among men who have acquired, with the English language and citizenship, an understanding of American industrial standards and an American point of view' (p. 24). Embracing this philosophy, the federal Bureau of Education got behind the Americanization effort, producing publications and patriotic events aimed at immigrant workers, and funded entirely by outside 'philanthropists,' that is, by financiers and industrialists. Henry Ford was one of the most enthusiastic backers. Like many employers of the time, he required his foreign-born workers to attend classes in English and 'free enterprise' values (Higham, 1988). This was at the time of Theodore Roosevelt's fabled attacks on 'hyphenated Americanism,' calling on newcomers to shed all traits of ethnicity – especially foreign languages, which he saw as a symptom of divided loyalties. Roosevelt ([1917] 1926: XXI, 54) advocated giving 'every immigrant, by day schools for the young and night-schools for the adult, the chance to learn English; and if after, say, five years, he has not learned English, he should be sent back to the land from whence he came.'

During World War I, Americanization received a substantial boost from the xenophobia unleashed against German Americans, who for the first time bore the brunt of repressive language policies. Public uses of German were banned by emergency decree in numerous communities and some Midwestern states. German-language newspapers, schools, cultural institutions, and even churches came under assault (Wiley, 1998). Formerly the most prestigious modern language, studied by one in four US secondary students in 1915, German was virtually banned in schools throughout the country. Some school boards sponsored the burning of German textbooks (Wittke, 1936).

Suspicion toward foreign tongues broadened and deepened during the postwar Red Scare. In the year 1919 alone, fifteen states adopted English-only instruction laws (Leibowitz, 1969). Linguistic uniformity was seen as essential to rooting out alien conspiracies and containing a radical labor movement. It was during this period that, for the first time, an ideological link was established between speaking 'good English' and being a 'good American.'

In the early 1920s Congress enacted the strictest immigration quotas in US history, which limited the entry of non-English-speaking Europeans – Italians, Poles, Jews, Greeks – and totally excluded Asians. This effectively ended popular pressures for Americanization, along with elite worries about revolution. With few reinforcements coming in, non-anglophone groups dwindled in size. Children not only learned English but lost their mother tongue in the process. Native-language instruction disappeared, except in a handful of rural and parochial schools. Bilingualism – had anyone thought to call it that – thus became a moot issue. Only after 1965, when racial criteria were expunged from US immigration policy, did non-anglophone communities begin to grow once more.

Sources of the Modern English-only Movement

Earlier I characterized today's English-only campaign as a mainstream phenomenon. It would be more precise to call it a broad current fed by numerous social and ideological sources. These include class-based resentments toward prosperous immigrant groups as well as class-based fears about the poorest. Agrarian populism and revolutionary syndicalism have long since died out in the United States. Yet, just as in the Americanization era, outlets are needed for the economic frustrations and insecurities of Anglo-American workers and small producers, whose real incomes have been on a downward trajectory since 1973. Hence the xenophobic reaction crystallized by Patrick Buchanan's 'take back America' rhetoric.⁹ Moreover, there are new middle-class anxieties about the declining quality of life, overcrowding, crime, rootlessness, and incivility, all of which find a scapegoat in our growing multiculturalism (Fishman, 1992).

The modern English-only movement dates from 1983, when former Senator S.I. Hayakawa of California teamed up with Dr John Tanton, a Michigan ophthalmologist, environmentalist, and population control activist, to found US English. This lobby has spearheaded the Official English offensive in Congress, state legislatures, and ballot campaigns. It has proved remarkably successful. Within four years of its founding, US English claimed 400,000 dues-paying members and an annual budget of \$5 million; its proposals had been considered by forty-eight of the fifty states. Voters have passed several English-only measures, generally by overwhelming margins,¹⁰ and numerous legislatures have followed suit. In 1998, Alaska became the twenty-third state to adopt a law designating English as its official language.

Why the zealous 'defense' of English? Who would think to become lobbyists for a language that the vast majority of Americans take for granted, a seemingly thankless task? What are the incentives for such

activity? To all appearances, US English is not an organization of educators, literary figures, or language lovers. It professes no particular reverence for English – just for some generic common language (Nunberg, 1992). What motivates the English-only leadership?

Investigation of their internal documents, funding sources, and organizational ties reveals a covert agenda: determination to resist racial and cultural diversity in the United States. Consider the close, but frequently denied, connections between language restrictionists and immigration restrictionists. At one time or another, US English and the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR) have shared a suite of offices, a general counsel, a direct-mail wizard, a political-action-committee director, a writer-publicist, several rich contributors, and Dr Tanton himself as founder and chairman. Yet each group has repeatedly disclaimed any association with the other. The ideological affinity between the two became clear in an internal memorandum, leaked to the news media, in which Tanton (1986) warned of a Hispanic political takeover of the United States through immigration and high birthrates:

Gobernar es poblar translates ‘to govern is to populate.’ ... In this society where the majority rules, does this hold? Will the present majority peaceably hand over its political power to a group that is simply more fertile? ... Perhaps this is the first instance in which those with their pants up are going to get caught by those with their pants down! ... As Whites see their power and control over their lives declining, will they simply go quietly into the night? Or will there be an explosion? ... We’re building in a deadly disunity. All great empires disintegrate, we want stability. (Tanton, 1986: 3–6)

Among all the unflattering stereotypes about Latinos cited in the memo – Catholicism, with its threat to ‘pitch out the separation of church and state’; failure to use birth control; lack of concern for the environment; low ‘educability’; and limited English skills – only the last was respectable enough to broach in the public discourse. Hence the role of US English, in what appears to be a division of labor with FAIR: to use language issues to highlight the cultural costs of immigration, thereby promoting demands for tighter quotas.

While both groups have sought to project a bipartisan image, FAIR has been more willing to court benefactors on the far right.¹¹ Over the years it accepted more than \$1 million from the Pioneer Fund, a foundation created in 1937 to promote ‘racial betterment’ through eugenics. After working to popularize what it called ‘Applied Genetics in Present-Day Germany’ – the Nazis’ *Lebensborn* and forced sterilization programs

– Pioneer broadened its focus to support restrictive immigration policies, anti-busing activities, and research into ‘racial’ differences in intelligence. In the 1980s it financed a publication glorifying the founder of the Ku Klux Klan (Crawford, 1992a). Although Tanton claimed to be unaware of these activities when they came to light, FAIR continued to accept large grants from the Pioneer Fund. It should be noted that such associations hardly prove a unity of purpose with Nazis and Klansmen. On the other hand, they say a great deal about the sensibilities of Tanton and his cohorts, who seem to find racial extremism less worrisome than racial diversity.

Not long before these disclosures, US English commissioned an internal membership survey to learn more about its sources of support. Asked why they had sent in donations, 42 percent of respondents agreed with the statement: ‘I wanted America to stand strong and not cave in to Hispanics who shouldn’t be here’ (Lawrence Co., 1988). Here we find a none-too-subtle indicator of what the pollster termed ‘the redneck factor.’ Yet the organization’s membership was hardly representative of lower-class Americans, according to the survey. The US English ranks turned out to be disproportionately affluent, male, conservative, college-educated, northern European in origin, and elderly (75 percent were at least sixty years of age).

For English-only leaders and activists, prejudice against speakers of Spanish and other minority languages appears to be a significant motivator. But what of the much broader group of Americans who vote for, or merely express agreement with, campaigns for Official English? Are they equally intolerant of immigrants and eager to make their lives difficult? Or merely ignorant of the movement’s implications?

Alarm about the new immigration is closely associated with English-only fervor. In a study of California voting patterns, Hero *et al.* (1996) found that county-level support for Proposition 63, the Official English measure passed in 1986, was a ‘very strong’ ($r = 0.82$) predictor of support for Proposition 187, the ‘border control’ measure passed in 1994. Striking as that finding may be, it unfortunately provides no way to differentiate between intentions that are benign (e.g. a desire to promote English acquisition among newcomers) and those that are mean-spirited (e.g. a desire to discriminate, or at least put out the ‘unwelcome’ mat). Nor, in all likelihood, can many English-only supporters make such distinctions themselves; motives in this campaign are often mixed. Seldom does today’s nativism take the form of a pure and undiluted hatred of foreigners. Rather, it is a volatile brew of anxieties and animosities, insecurities and prejudices, which flow from class as well as

ethnicity. Such ingredients also find potent expression in language politics.

These conflicts vary widely from one community to another, as illustrated by the following vignettes (for additional details, see Crawford, 1992a, 1992b).

Monterey Park, California, was transformed in the 1980s from a lackluster bedroom community of Los Angeles into a dynamic magnet for Taiwanese immigrants – ‘the Chinese Beverly Hills,’ as one realtor promoted it. It also became a financial center for Asian entrepreneurs, home to more than a dozen Chinese-owned banks. Asian Americans, who represented just 3 percent of Monterey Park’s population in 1960, expanded into a majority by 1986. Instead of opening corner grocery stores, as immigrants are expected to do, the newcomers bought out American supermarkets and restocked them with Asian goods. Chinese developers built high-density ‘mini-malls’ catering primarily to immigrant consumers. Not surprisingly, property values and rents soared; many longtime Anglo-Americans found they could no longer afford to live in the city. Worse, they said, they felt like strangers in their own community – a resentment that has found in language a convenient symbol for all the unsettling cultural and demographic changes.

An English-only reaction, beginning in the mid-1980s, focused on the prominence of Asian characters on business signs and on a donation of Chinese-language books to the public library, both of which city officials tried to restrict. These skirmishes, though seemingly petty, had great significance for Chinese Americans and, to a lesser extent, Mexican Americans, as well as for the local Anglos who resented their success. The impact was highly divisive, notwithstanding English-only proponents’ rhetoric about ‘unity’ through a common language. By 1990, however, Monterey Park’s immigrants had finally begun to acquire political clout proportionate to their numbers, and they succeeded in voting out the most vocal nativists. Tensions over language have since receded.

In *Dade County, Florida*, a similar reaction set in against the fast-growing Latino population, which dislodged white Anglo-Americans from majority status by the early 1980s. But the class factors in Miami’s language battles have been more complex. Earlier the community had welcomed the first waves of Cuban exiles, who were typically middle-class and well educated, if temporarily short on cash. In 1973, the Metro-Dade Commission declared the county officially bilingual and bicultural. But the Mariel boatlift of 1980 brought Cubans who were darker, poorer, younger, and, in some instances, criminal (as Fidel Castro seized the opportunity to empty his jails). More than 100,000 ended up in South Florida, which felt a jarring impact on its schools, justice system,

and social service agencies. Anglos often reacted with resentment, especially at the costs of helping *Marielitos* adjust.

In 1980, Dade County voters passed the so-called Anti-Bilingual Ordinance, arguably the most draconian language law in US history. It prohibited – without exception – any county expenditure ‘for the purpose of utilizing any language other than English, or promoting any culture other than that of the United States.’ This led, among many other restrictions, to a ban on hurricane warnings and bus schedules in Spanish, an embargo on prenatal care pamphlets in Haitian Creole, and the removal of non-English-language signs at the Dade Metrozoo, where some vigilant citizens had complained about the Latin species names posted outside animal cages.

Ironically, Spanish continued to thrive as a language of business, turning Miami into a banking, trade, and media center for all of Latin America. Bilingualism and biculturalism were an enormous local boon, as Anglo elites (like the editorial board of the *Miami Herald*) quickly recognized. It was the petit-bourgeois and working-class anglophones who felt the pinch, as Spanish skills became necessary for advancement. To get a lowly job as a cashier or gas station attendant, bilingualism was increasingly required, just as it was to prosper as a doctor, lawyer, or small business owner. For many Anglos, this kindled an ethnocentric reaction against all things Hispanic.¹² Some left the area, while others learned to adjust. With relatively little public commotion (at least by Miami standards), the Anti-Bilingual Ordinance was finally repealed in 1993.

Lowell, Massachusetts, exemplifies a more familiar pattern of haves reacting to an influx of have-nots. In this case, the latter were primarily Southeast Asian and secondarily Latino. As a textile center – indeed, a birthplace of the Industrial Revolution in this country – Lowell had been built by successive waves of immigrants, notably Irish, Poles, French Canadians, Lithuanians, Portuguese, Russian Jews, and Armenians. Among the last to arrive, before Congress slammed the ‘golden door’ in the early 1920s, were the Greeks. Their immigration resumed after World War II, making Lowell one of the largest Greek-speaking communities in the country, which it remains. Ironically, they also became prominent in the local English-only campaign, which was led by a Greek American member of the school board. Again the trigger of contention was demographic change. Southeast Asian refugees, began arriving in the late 1970s. Within ten years they represented one-quarter of the local population, making Lowell one of the nation’s largest settlements of Cambodians.

Among the forces driving language conflict were native fears about crime, welfare dependency, and competition for scarce jobs. These were

often accompanied by a sense of injustice that today's newcomers appeared to be getting a better deal than those who arrived at the turn of the 20th century and allegedly struggled to succeed without help from government.¹³ Resentment focused on the rising costs of public schools, which featured bilingual programs in five languages (not including Greek, which was taught in parochial schools). In 1989, the city's voters overwhelmingly approved an Official English declaration. The measure was non-binding, but the emotions it stirred continue to poison relations between Lowell's old and new ethnics.

Language Rights and the English-only Mentality

Each of these examples raises substantive questions of language policy: What kinds of bilingual accommodations are reasonable and necessary to ensure minorities' access to government and education? What criteria should be used to decide when and how to provide such services, to which language groups, and at what cost? How can language barriers be overcome, or at least mitigated, in the private sector? What kinds of educational programs appear promising for diverse groups of students and which should be offered in the public schools? Each of these issues has practical implications for newcomers and natives alike. Yet rarely are the details – costs and benefits – seriously discussed before hostilities erupt. Such mundane concerns, in themselves, rarely seem to provoke language conflicts.

What seems to gall English-only advocates is not the translation of street signs or tax forms or children's lessons, but what these accommodations symbolize: a public recognition that limited-English speakers are part of the community and therefore entitled to services from government, even if that may entail 'special' programs and expenditures. Why would anyone find this threatening? Perhaps because it legitimizes diversity, notwithstanding the challenges involved. It implies certain rights that were not previously acknowledged. Thus in a small way, when government offers bilingual assistance, it elevates the status of language minorities. It suggests that immigrants and Native peoples need not abandon their heritage to be considered American – or at least to be given access to democratic institutions. In short, it alters structures of power, class, and ethnicity. The demand for language restrictions, by contrast, is a demand to reinforce the existing social order.

US English and similar groups have repeatedly disavowed the *English-only* label. In part, this is a public relations ploy,¹⁴ but it also provides a clue to their ideology. Individual bilingualism is fine, even laudable, they say. Everyone should speak a 'foreign language.' It is 'societal bilingualism'

that divides us into warring groups, they explain. Let minorities speak their languages in private contexts – at home, in churches, in private schools – but do not encourage Babel in the public square. By offering bilingual assistance, the restrictionists warn, government sends a message that civic life is acceptable in languages other than English. Thus they denounce as ‘official bilingualism’ the tiniest concession to diversity.

No matter that such accommodations can benefit and, indeed, unify society as a whole. The precedent is what troubles the English-only mentality. Who knows where the slippery slope might lead – social equality? fewer advantages for white Anglo-Americans? linguistic human rights for everyone? These are nightmarish prospects for the privileged and the powerful, and for those who share their worldview.

Notes

1. In chronological order, the Official English states are: Nebraska (constitutional amendment, 1920); Illinois (statute, 1969); Virginia (statute, 1981); Indiana, Kentucky, and Tennessee (statutes, 1984); California (constitutional amendment, 1986); Arkansas, Mississippi, North Carolina, North Dakota, and South Carolina (statutes, 1987); Arizona, Colorado, and Florida (constitutional amendments, 1988); Alabama (constitutional amendment, 1990); New Hampshire, Montana, and South Dakota (statutes, 1995); Georgia and Wyoming (statutes, 1996); and Alaska and Missouri (statutes, 1998). Arizona’s Proposition 106 (Article 28) was struck down as unconstitutional in 1998, leaving a total of twenty-two states with active Official English laws.
2. In early 1996, the long-sought ‘Nazi connection’ seemed to emerge. Just before the New Hampshire primary, it was disclosed that Larry Pratt, a co-chairman of Patrick Buchanan’s presidential campaign, had addressed conferences of the Aryan Nations and Christian Identity movements, where white supremacist ideas, neo-Nazi symbols, and armed militia organizing were prominent. Pratt also happens to be the founder and president of English First, a small political action committee that promotes Official English legislation. English First publications, like Buchanan’s stump speeches, have featured racist innuendoes directed at Latinos in particular. Opponents of the English-only campaign seized on this revelation, hoping that Pratt’s unsavory associations might help to reduce the momentum of English-only bills on Capitol Hill. I myself wrote a newspaper column to publicize the news (Crawford, 1996a). Nevertheless, Pratt’s flirtation with extremists is essentially irrelevant. He is a minor player in this field, who seems mainly interested in competing for direct-mail dollars with more established lobbies that target gun control, abortion rights, homosexuals, immigrants, and language minorities. In my estimation, he is basically a businessman who specializes in Right-wing goods and is not very choosy about his clientele.
3. In the late 1980s, Cousins, Vidal, and Cronkite, who appear to have had little knowledge of US English activities, asked that their names be removed from the group’s letterhead following publicity about its founder’s anti-Hispanic comments.
4. For example, a *New York Times*/CBS News poll (11–14 May 1987) asked 1254

adults: 'Would you favor or oppose an amendment to the Constitution that requires federal, state, and local governments to conduct business in English and not use other languages, even in places where many people don't speak English?' Respondents were evenly split, at 47 percent. Arizona's Article 28, the most restrictive English-only measure to date, passed with only 50.5 percent of the vote in 1988 and was later ruled unconstitutional by the state supreme court.

5. An estimated 7.3 million immigrants (documented and undocumented) entered the United States during the 1980s, according to the US Immigration and Naturalization Service (1993). This number was second only to the 1900–1910 decade, when 8.8 million arrived. In proportion to the total US population, however, the immigration of the 1980s was less than 30 percent the level of 1900–1910.
6. For example, Citrin *et al.* (1990: 549) take at face value respondents' claims that they would welcome 'today's new immigrants' into their neighborhoods; that it was 'a good thing' for immigrants to preserve their native languages and customs; and that learning English was key to 'making someone a true American.'
7. This diatribe comes from the conclusion of *Observations Concerning the Increase of Mankind* (1751), Franklin's most Malthusian work. He elaborates a 'racial' line of argument against German immigration that seems bizarre (if also sadly familiar) in today's context:

The number of purely white People in the World is proportionably very small. All Africa is black or tawny. Asia chiefly tawny. America (exclusive of the new Comers) wholly so. And in Europe, the Spaniards, Italians, French, Russians, and Swedes are generally of what we call a swarthy complexion; as are the Germans also, the Saxons only excepted, who with the English make up the principal Body of White People on the Face of the Earth. I could wish their Numbers were increased. And while we are, as I may call it *Scouring* our Planet, by clearing America of Woods, and so making this Side of our Globe reflect a brighter Light to the Eyes of Inhabitants in Mars or Venus, why should we in the Sight of Superior Beings, darken its People? Why increase the Sons of Africa, by Planting them in America, where we have so fair an Opportunity, by excluding all Blacks and Tawneys, of increasing the lovely White and Red? But perhaps I am partial to the Complexion of my Country, for such kind of Partiality is natural to Mankind. (Franklin, [1751] 1961: IV, 234; emphasis in original)

Apparently regretting these remarks, in 1760 Franklin excised them from later editions of his writings. But his political enemies revived the passage during the 1764 election.

8. It should be noted that language discrimination was among the least of the Chinese immigrants' problems. The 1879 constitution prohibited them from working in public or corporate employment and sought – unconstitutionally, as it turned out – to ban their settlement in the state of California (Sandmeyer, 1939).
9. English-only themes featured prominently in Buchanan's 1996 presidential campaign, with television commercials promising to 'declare a "time-out" on new immigration, secure America's borders, and insist on one language, English, for all Americans' (*Washington Post*, 27 February 1996).
10. In California, the vote in favor was 73 percent; in Florida, 84 percent; in Colo-

rado, 61 percent; in Alabama, 89 percent; and in Alaska, 69 percent. Of the six ballot campaigns thus far, only Arizona's was close, with the English-only measure garnering 50.5 percent of the vote; it was later ruled unconstitutional.

11. It is worth noting, however, that both FAIR and US English received major, long-term support from the Laurel Foundation, whose other philanthropic projects included population control in the Third World and the distribution of a futuristic novel depicting the destruction of the white race by Third World immigrants (Crawford, 1992a).
12. It has also led to some fascinating role reversals. To the extent that English-only legislation has been a partisan issue in South Florida, Republicans have opposed it as an infringement of civil liberties while Democrats have favored it as a symbolic statement of Americanism. When Florida passed its Official English amendment in 1988, it won overwhelmingly in liberal Jewish Miami Beach, which was carried easily by Michael Dukakis; it lost by even larger margins in Cuban precincts that supported George Bush. This vote mirrors a divergence that is typical among Miami Jews and Cubans on most issues. It also reflects status anxieties and resentments directed, as in Monterey Park, toward affluent newcomers who do not conform to classic immigrant patterns.
14. In fact, turn-of-the-century immigrants enjoyed a good deal more assistance than their descendants imagine, including state-financed night schools taught by Greek-speaking teachers – a form of bilingual education.
15. US English was first to popularize the term during a 1984 ballot campaign in California, entitled 'Voting Materials in English Only.' Only later did it see the downside of truth in advertising.

Boom to Bust: Official English in the 1990s

November 8, 1988 should have been a day of celebration for English-only advocates. Voters in Arizona, Colorado, and Florida turned out in large numbers to approve ballot measures declaring English the official language of their state governments. This brought the total of such laws to sixteen, more than half enacted in the previous two years. To all appearances, the anti-bilingual forces had never been stronger. Yet for the leading English-only organization, these wins proved Pyrrhic in the extreme. US English lost its founder and chairman, its president, and one of its best known celebrity endorsers during the 1988 campaign. All were forced to resign in a scandal involving a leaked memorandum, organizational ties, and funding sources that revealed an agenda of anti-Latino prejudice.

For many Americans, these disclosures shattered the facade of innocence surrounding Official English. Clearly, this movement was about more than reaffirming language as a totem of national identity. Its stated objectives of ethnic harmony and minority advancement were now hard to sustain, with US English leaders cracking jokes about fast-breeding Mexicans.

Nowhere was the damage more evident than in Arizona, where editorial cartoons linked English-only proponents to Nazis and Klansmen. The initiative there was especially draconian – ‘This State shall act in English and no other language’ (Arizona Constitution, 1988) – and it polarized the state along racial lines. The measure, known as Article 28, passed with barely one percent of the vote. Immediately challenged as an assault on free speech, it was blocked by a federal judge and was later ruled unconstitutional by the Arizona Supreme Court (*Ruíz v. Hull*, 1998). This version of Official English stressed restriction, not affirmation, calling on Americans to ‘defend our common language’ against alien forces. Its agenda was transparent, no longer viable as a fig leaf for intolerance. Popular support for the movement declined accordingly.

In the mid-1990s, however, the American political scene was transformed by a resurgence of nativism and the election of the most conservative Congress in half a century. As immigrants came under direct attack

by legislators, US English no longer appeared so extreme. Its dream of a national English-only law now seemed within reach. In this new environment, the House of Representatives voted to designate English the official medium of US government operations and to ban most uses of other languages by federal agencies and officials. But the bill fell short of victory when the Senate failed to act before adjourning for the year, and Republicans soon lost interest when the issue brought them no partisan advantage. They also began to worry about alienating Hispanic and Asian Americans, the fastest-growing sectors of the electorate. Although the legislation was reintroduced in the next two Congresses, it was never brought to a vote. English-only advocates returned to esoteric issues, such as a hypothetical language policy for Puerto Rico, should the island's residents some day opt for statehood. Hardly an engaging issue for non-Puerto Ricans.

English-only activism thus came full circle during the 1990s, from fringe-group status to mainstream acceptance to political marginality. After recovering from scandal, the movement nearly won its greatest legislative battle. Yet, by the end of the decade, its campaign for Official English had never seemed less relevant, as voters and politicians moved on to other concerns. This progression is instructive in the nature of the US language policy debate, its premises, and its likely directions.

Disgrace and Rehabilitation

Until 1988, the English-only movement had expanded rapidly as an outlet for native frustrations. By seizing on language as a symbol of what troubled them about immigrants, Anglo-Americans could register a protest without seeming bigoted. Espousing Official English enabled them to strike back against diversity while maintaining a pose of fair-mindedness. Foreigners were welcome to come and share in the abundance of America, the rationale went, provided they met their responsibilities to blend in and adopt our language. John Tanton (1988), chairman of US English and author of the notorious memo, invoked this principle in his own defense: 'I am not a racist. I want to bring all members of the American family to share in our Thanksgiving feast – but I also want us to be able to speak to each other when we're gathered around the table.' This appeal was less than convincing, however, from a man who recycled unflattering stereotypes about Latinos.

Disclosure of the Tanton (1986) memo had immediate consequences. Walter Cronkite, a member of the US English advisory board, broke publicly with the organization, declaring: 'I cannot favor legislation that could even remotely be interpreted to restrict the civil rights or the educa-

tional opportunities of our minority population.' He asked that his name no longer be used in US English fundraising. Linda Chávez quit as the group's president, calling Tanton's views 'repugnant ... not excusable ... anti-Catholic and anti-Hispanic.' The chairman himself was forced to resign following disclosures about his network of non-profit organizations and their financial backers. The latter included foundations dedicated to promoting eugenics, limiting the reproduction of Third World peoples, distributing white supremacist tracts, and sponsoring research purporting to prove the inferiority of non-whites (Crawford, 1992a).

In the aftermath, English-only advocates not surprisingly found their message to be a harder sell with legislators and editorial writers. While many conservatives continued to support Official English, dismissing the charge of racism, it became difficult for moderates and liberals to do so. Even President Bush opposed the idea; in a television interview his wife, Barbara, condemned it as 'a racial slur.' Between 1988 and 1995, just one additional state adopted such legislation – Alabama, hardly a bellwether for the nation.

Moreover, the scandal took a devastating toll on US English itself. Infighting broke out between Tanton loyalists and detractors, leading to resignations and dismissals. Turnover of professional staff approached 100 percent annually. Fundraising suffered. The Internal Revenue Service opened an investigation to determine whether the organization was abusing its tax-exempt status by engaging in lobbying and partisan politics. By 1992, a financial crisis forced US English to lay off employees and close regional offices.

Hard times, as well as the death of co-founder S.I. Hayakawa, brought factional strife into the open. When board members accused Tanton's successor, Stanley Diamond, of misappropriating funds, he alleged that the organization had long engaged in 'illegal [political] activities'¹ (Kaplan, 1992). After being forced out, several of Diamond's detractors tried to regain control of the organization by forming an Emergency Committee to Save US English. The main effect was to air dirty laundry in the newspapers. Finally, embarrassed allies in Congress, led by Representative Bill Emerson of Missouri, insisted on a thorough house-cleaning. Diamond was asked to resign and former Representative Norman Shumway of California took over until a permanent replacement could be found. In 1993, Mauro Mujica, a South American immigrant, was named to head the organization.

Besides restoring stability, the new chairman's mission was to repair the image of US English. A lobby perceived as extremist had little hope of passing legislation. So Mujica worked to refocus its message on new themes, downplaying the threat of language conflict and emphasizing the

benefits of English to immigrants. Soon he was running advertisements in national magazines under the headline 'Why a Hispanic² Heads an Organization Called US English':

I am proud of my heritage. Yet when I emigrated to the United States from Chile in 1965 to study architecture at Columbia University, I knew that to succeed I would have to adopt the language of my new home. As in the past, it is critical today for immigrants to learn English as quickly as possible. And that's so they can benefit from the many economic opportunities this land has to offer. ... On the job and in the schools we're supporting projects that will ensure that all Americans have the chance to learn the language of equal opportunity. (US English, 1994)

By stressing the positive, Mujica hoped to defend a flank on which the organization had long been vulnerable. On the one hand, US English was proposing to 'encourage' immigrants to learn the language by terminating assistance in their native tongues. On the other hand, it was promising them no direct assistance in doing so. When an Official English initiative passed in California, it did nothing to help the 40,000 adults on waiting lists for English classes in Los Angeles alone (*Los Angeles Times*, 1986). Instructional opportunities were scarce in other states as well. Yet, despite a multimillion-dollar budget for lobbying, US English had never pressed for public subsidies to ease the shortage. When asked, it refused to support a federal effort along these lines proposed by the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, insisting that the job of English instruction should be handled by the private sector.

For opponents, this contradiction spoke volumes about the hypocrisy of English-only advocates. To advocate spending the taxpayers' money on immigrants – even as a ploy – was obviously unacceptable to many US English supporters. To keep contributions flowing in, Mujica had to find another way to demonstrate good will toward language minorities. So he revived 'Project Golden Door,' a program of charitable donations to support English instruction in communities and workplaces. Although the effort committed only token amounts for this purpose, its public relations benefits were substantial. And, of course, it supplied a ready answer to the critics.

Conservative Restoration

As US English repositioned itself closer to the center, the center was sliding rapidly to the right. A lingering recession and perceived 'gridlock' in government had left voters in a dyspeptic mood. Striking back against

liberal and moderate incumbents, they made 1994 the Year of the Angry White Male. Targets of middle-class rage included taxation, welfare, affirmative action, multiculturalism, and immigration policies – all deemed to benefit ‘undeserving’ minorities at the expense of the dominant group. California confirmed its reputation as a trend-setter by adopting Proposition 187, an initiative that barred the children of ‘illegal aliens’ from the public schools and turned educators into virtual deputies of the Border Patrol. The same election swept Republicans to power in both houses of Congress, voicing a range of populist demands. Pundits proclaimed that a conservative ‘revolution’ – or, at least, a major political realignment – had occurred. Republicans declared their victory a popular mandate to dismantle the status quo in Washington. There was talk of repealing decades’ worth of anti-poverty and civil-rights programs, reducing the tax ‘burden’ on prosperous Americans, and taking a harder line toward immigrants, undocumented and otherwise.

Newt Gingrich (1995), the flamboyant new Speaker of the House, articulated these themes in a best-selling book, *To Renew America*. Prominent among them was a call ‘to impose the English language’ on immigrants (p. 159). ‘Bilingualism’ threatened ‘the very fabric of American society,’ he warned. ‘A civilization is only one generation deep and it can be lost in a very short time. Insisting that each new generation be assimilated is the *sine qua non* of our survival’ (p. 162). The Speaker signaled that Republicans planned to deal firmly with the ‘uncivilized.’ Official English legislation, long thwarted by Democrats, would receive ample attention in the 104th Congress.

Soon his Senate counterpart, Majority Leader Bob Dole, climbed on the bandwagon. Preparing to seek the presidency, the senator needed to ingratiate himself with the right wing of his own party. That meant taking sides in what his rival Patrick Buchanan called ‘the cultural war.’ At a convention of military veterans, Dole (1995: 4) deployed the heavy rhetorical artillery:

English is the language in which we still speak to each other across the frontiers of culture and race. It is the language of the Constitution. It is the language in which we conduct our great national debates – an essential ingredient of democracy. Insisting that all our citizens are fluent in English is a welcoming act of inclusion, and insist upon it we must. ... With all the divisive forces tearing at our country, we need the glue of language to help hold us together. If we want to ensure that all our children have the same opportunities in life, alternative language education should stop and English should be acknowledged once and for all as the official language of the United States.

This statement, coming from a presidential contender, put the language issue back on the map. National media had largely ignored English-only activity since 1988. Now they rediscovered its relevance in connection with changing attitudes toward immigrants. A spate of news stories appeared on the impact of language barriers, particularly in the classroom. Many focused on the alleged shortcomings of bilingual education. Pollsters revisited the question of Official English and reported strong support among the voters.³ Sensing a groundswell, members of Congress rushed to attach their names to half a dozen such bills; by the end of 1995, more than 220 had signed on as co-sponsors.

Republican leaders sensed something else. Here was an issue that could further weaken the Democratic Party by driving a wedge into its multi-ethnic coalition. They knew that the prevailing hostility toward immigrants was visceral rather than ideological. It resulted largely from the irritants of daily life, to which liberals and moderates were hardly immune. Language evoked reactions that were especially emotional. This was true both among natives who resented bilingual accommodations by government, and among ethnic groups who resented their resentment. English-only legislation therefore posed a dilemma for Democrats. They could either appease members of the majority by compromising long-held principles on civil rights, or they could defend minority interests and accelerate white flight from the party. Republicans were spared such worries because their coalition included relatively few racial or linguistic minorities (Vietnamese and Cuban exiles being the prime exceptions). In strictly political terms, Official English seemed like a winner to Gingrich and Dole.

As a matter of policy, however, it remained problematic. The United States had managed without an official language for more than 200 years and English remained overwhelmingly dominant. Why was there now a need to restrict bilingualism? How could one justify a ban on certain kinds of speech in conducting the business of democracy? What would such a policy accomplish in practice, other than impeding government operations, offending the Bill of Rights, and depriving limited-English speakers of rights and services to which they were entitled? Why open the Pandora's box of litigation that would surely ensue, not to mention the conflict between ethnic groups? Where were the facts to support such a radical piece of legislation? Answers to these questions were so scarce that several commentators dubbed Official English 'a solution in search of a problem' (e.g. *USA Today*, 1995).

There was, of course, a *perceived* problem. After decades of limited immigration, Americans were unaccustomed to language diversity. Tight quotas on newcomers adopted in the 1920s had gradually reduced

the foreign-born population from 14.9 percent in 1910 to 4.8 percent in 1970. Then the pattern began to reverse itself. In 1965, Congress repealed laws that had largely excluded immigrants from non-Anglo-Saxon nations. The number of foreign-born soon doubled, to 9.3 percent of US residents by 1996. Equally important, their countries of origin changed from primarily European to primarily Asian and Latin American (Hansen and Faber, 1997).⁴ Suddenly non-anglophones were noticeable again. In some neighborhoods Spanish, Mandarin, or Vietnamese became the majority language. Relative to earlier periods, this was nothing out of the ordinary. But in the late 20th century, it was foreign to the life experience of most English speakers. Hearing other languages spoken freely in public seemed unnatural, even sinister to many Anglo-Americans, who feared that immigrants were no longer assimilating. English seemed to be losing ground to competitors, jeopardizing the nation's sense of unity and purpose. A troubling situation indeed.

Such feelings were real, if ill-founded. Sponsors of English-only legislation sought to bolster them with what could be called *the Babel argument*. Testifying before a House subcommittee, Representative Toby Roth of Wisconsin claimed that 'for one in seven Americans, English is a foreign language. ... I want to keep America one nation, one people. We must preserve the common bond that has kept his country of immigrants together for more than two centuries by making English our official language' (US House of Representatives, 1995a: 17–18). Though literally accurate, the Congressman's numbers were misleading. It was true that in the 1990 census, about one in seven US residents reported speaking a non-English language at home. But *not only* a non-English language. The vast majority were bilingual to varying degrees; just 3 percent of the population spoke English 'not well' or 'not at all.' Other Republicans cited with horror a census estimate that 323 languages were spoken in the United States.⁵ The figure was impressive, yet what did it prove other than the rich variety of immigrants and indigenous peoples? It revealed nothing about rates of anglicization.

To be sure, the number of minority-language speakers has increased rapidly in recent years. As long as immigration continues at current levels, there is no reason to doubt that this trend will continue. Meanwhile, however, there is a stronger, countervailing trend toward bilingualism, as today's immigrants seem to be acquiring English more rapidly than those of earlier periods (Veltman, 1983, 1988). Considering the spread of electronic media and information technology, this should be neither surprising nor difficult to grasp. It is certainly not difficult to prove empirically. In 1990, there were 31.8 million US residents (aged 5 and above) who spoke a home language other than English, a 38 percent

increase over 1980. Yet there was an even faster increase – more than 100 percent – in the English fluency of minority-language speakers residing in the country for less than ten years. Put another way, more than half of immigrants who had arrived during the previous decade spoke English ‘very well’ in 1990⁶ (Waggoner, 1995).

Even more impressive are the language choices of their descendants. A long-term study of second-generation immigrants in South Florida and Southern California, using a detailed survey far more precise than the census ‘snapshot,’ found no threat to English whatsoever. To the contrary, by the end of high school, 88 percent of these children of Hispanic and Asian immigrants preferred to communicate exclusively in English (Dugger, 1998). More than one-third of the Florida sample had already lost their native language by the 8th or 9th grade⁷ (Portes and Schauffler, 1996). A remarkable degree of *Babel in reverse*.

The Case for Official English

Even assuming they could prove the opposite was true – that assimilation was slowing down – Republicans still faced a problem. No one disputed that all US residents should be proficient in English; the issue was one of means. How could the party of ‘limited government’ justify legislation to engineer social behavior? Conservatives had recaptured Congress by mobilizing voters disaffected with Washington for allegedly trampling the liberties of individuals and local authorities. If Official English was designed to coerce conformity in matters of language, wasn’t it just another ‘federal mandate’? Thematically, it appeared to clash with the Contract with America, a campaign manifesto in which House Republicans had promised to reduce regulations and red tape. At the time there would likely have been little trouble enacting a symbolic declaration of Official English, hailing the ‘unifying role’ of the national language and calling on all Americans to learn it. But having pushed through such measures in states like California, to little effect, English-only proponents insisted on a law with teeth: a mandate to restrict the use of other tongues. The question was how to make this goal compatible with a conservative libertarian agenda.

Republicans’ answer was to portray government not as the cure for diversity, but as the source of the epidemic. English-only legislation would be a way to ‘reform’ federal programs that allegedly encouraged dependence on other languages. *Bilingualism* was thereby redefined, from a demographic reality to a pernicious policy of Big Government. Accommodations for limited-English-speakers were assailed as the cause of, rather than a response to, the growth of non-anglophone communities.

The implication was that if federal bureaucrats would stop meddling with market forces and creating disincentives to assimilation, the 'problem' would solve itself.

Thus Official English became part of the Gingrich gospel, another instance where government could unleash initiative by simply getting out of the way. Eliminating bilingual services would 'empower' immigrants to learn English and make them productive members of society. Though hardly novel, the *empowerment argument* coincided for the first time with the rhetoric of a majority party in Congress. Republicans showcased this rationale at a House subcommittee hearing in late 1995. All eight witnesses were drawn from ethnic minorities, and all but one⁸ endorsed House Resolution (H.R.) 123, the so-called 'English Language Empowerment Act.'

The bill proposed (1) to declare English the official language of the federal government; (2) to forbid the use of any other language by its agencies, employees, and officers, except in limited circumstances;⁹ (3) to protect English-speakers against 'discrimination' by federal agencies and programs; and (4) to invite lawsuits by any person who felt injured by violations of the English-only policy. Oral bilingualism was later exempted from the ban, but written communication by the federal government in a non-English language would be *verboden*, even by elected representatives.

While their testimonials varied in detail, each of the seven supporting witnesses articulated the same basic themes. We could never have made it without English, they insisted (though some appeared to speak no other language). Government was doing today's immigrants no favors by providing bilingual assistance – or 'linguistic welfare,' as Mauro Mujica described it (US House of Representatives, 1995b) – thus perpetuating the false hope that one could prosper in the United States without English. However well meaning, such policies had the effect of disempowering those they purported to serve. Ergo, Congress should eliminate disincentives to assimilation by requiring all public business to be conducted exclusively in English.

Again, however, there were nagging factual issues. Most obvious was the extent to which the government was currently operating bilingually. Only a handful of federal statutes, all enacted during the 1970s, mandated any kind of language accommodations. These involved court interpreters in some types of legal proceedings, bilingual staff at federally funded health facilities serving migrant workers, and voting materials in areas with significant non-English-literate populations (Dale, 1984). Limited numbers of clients were involved. Of course, it was difficult to quantify the assistance federal agencies provided to limited-English-speakers on

an as-needed basis. But where was the evidence that such accommodations were preventing anyone from learning English, or that their elimination would have the opposite effect?

Suspecting a lavish expenditure of federal dollars, the chief Senate sponsor of Official English, Richard Shelby of Alabama, commissioned a study to determine the amount of materials being published in non-English languages. Congressional researchers were dispatched to review the output of the US Government Printing Office (GPO) over the previous five years. They located about 400,000 titles, of which a mere 265 had been translated into other tongues. These were mostly informational pamphlets explaining Social Security benefits, health and safety precautions, tax laws, and tourist attractions (US General Accounting Office, 1995). The remainder – 99.94 percent of the GPO's products – were published in English. If Shelby was disappointed, however, he concealed it well. The senator described the foreign-language printing as an 'overwhelming' example of government waste (Associated Press, 1995).

Other English-only proponents took the opposite tack. Because of the relatively limited demand for Spanish-language tax forms and Chinese-language voting materials, they argued, such publications were clearly unnecessary. A few insisted that, in any case, it would be too costly and confusing for government to translate all of its activities into 323 different languages. In addition, serving some minority-language groups but not others would be discriminatory. Therefore, in the interest of efficiency and fairness, supporters of the legislation concluded, the government should publish only in English (*Congressional Record*, 1996). Yet rarely did they address the issues most relevant to policymaking:

- How extensive were the needs for federal services in various languages?
- How important was it to provide translations, both to assist limited-English-speakers and to advance broader goals such as government efficiency, public health, economic development, educational attainment, civil rights, due process, and the promotion of tourism?
- What balance should be struck between these benefits and the costs of producing certain publications in languages other than English?

If solving language problems were indeed the goal, answering such questions would be essential. Yet the legislators who championed Official English focused virtually all of their energies on denouncing bilingualism (the Babel argument) and extolling English proficiency (the empowerment argument). The most constructive role for government, they maintained, was no role at all, other than declaring its refusal to function in any

language but English. As for the practical effects of the legislation – who knew? The important thing, explained Representative John Doolittle of California, was to ‘send a clear message to the country so that we can help people help themselves’ (*Congressional Record*, 1996: H9765). Yet no actual help, other than ‘sending a message,’ was envisioned. It is hard to escape the conclusion that proponents had, at best, an incidental concern with formulating language policy. In essence, this was a political debate masquerading as a policy debate.

The political debate ultimately involved the social status and behavior patterns of immigrants. Were recently arrived Latinos and Asians a net benefit to the nation, or were they a burden to taxpayers and communities? Was it proper for government to offer them transitional help, or would that sap their initiative and eagerness to assimilate?

One side felt that immigrants should be guaranteed basic rights and services. Helping limited-English-speakers to overcome barriers of language would enable them to advance economically and to participate politically. In the long run, giving them a stake in the system was likely to avoid a host of difficulties for everyone. A little generosity, in other words, would serve the national self-interest.

The other side objected to bilingual assistance on principle, arguing that *we* owed nothing to *them* beyond an opportunity to succeed. Having come here of their own volition, immigrants would have to make it through their own efforts, just as our hard-working ancestors had done. Learning English was the first test of one’s fitness to be American. Coddling newcomers with bilingual services might seem humane, but was in reality a cruel policy that would exclude them from the mainstream.

By the time the legislation reached the House floor, the ‘tough love’ theme was prominent. Speaking for his fellow Republicans, as most of them prepared to cast votes in favor of H.R. 123, Representative Dana Rohrabacher of California addressed the immigrants who might be listening:

We care. We are the ones who care about every American citizen when we do not give them an easy way out, but we say, ‘Become part of America, we love you, we have caring in our heart. That’s why you should learn to speak English and that’s why we are doing you a disservice by making it easier for you to exist in our society without being able to communicate, without being able to be fully part of the economic system.’ (*Congressional Record*, 1996: H9765)

It was a familiar appeal in the 104th Congress. A day earlier the House had approved a final version of ‘welfare reform’ – the so-called Personal

Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 – resolving to teach the poor self-reliance by taking away their food stamps, medical care, disability insurance, and other safety nets.¹⁰

While the stated goals of H.R. 123 may have sounded positive, its means were decidedly not. It included no funding or other means to teach English – only provisions to make life more difficult for limited-English-speakers. In the words of Delegate Robert Underwood of Guam, the bill was ‘all stick and not much carrot’ (*Congressional Record*, 1996: H9766). Whether the stick would have the desired effect was a matter of speculation. Just as conservatives offered no proof that terminating welfare payments to pregnant teenagers would ‘encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families’ (Public Law [P.L.] 104-193, §401), they could not show how banning bilingual services would ‘help immigrants better assimilate and take full advantage of economic and occupational opportunities in the United States’ (H.R. 123, §101). Like the slashing of welfare programs, English-language ‘empowerment’ was an experiment whose risks would be borne not by the government but by the disadvantaged persons who depended on its help. Supporters of H.R. 123 and its Senate version, S. 356, never assessed those risks. Nor did they address numerous warnings about the harm an English-only law might do.

The Case Against Official English

As Congress considered these bills, legal challenges to Arizona’s Article 28 were wending their way through state and federal courts. This Official English amendment to the state constitution, passed by voters in 1988, was nearly identical to the federal legislation. Both banned most uses of non-English languages by government agencies, public employees, and elected officials. The only major difference was that the Arizona measure, unlike H.R. 123, applied to oral as well as written communications. A federal judge promptly decided that Article 28 would have a ‘chilling’ effect on the protected speech rights of state employees and declared it unconstitutional (*Yñiguez v. Mofford*, 1990). English-only proponents appealed.

On October 5, 1995, two weeks before House hearings opened on the English Language Empowerment Act, the federal appellate court for the 9th Circuit issued a final ruling in the Arizona case.¹¹ It condemned Article 28 in even stronger terms than the lower court had used. Embracing the logic of an earlier language rights decision, *Meyer v. Nebraska* (1923), the court’s 6–5 majority held:

In our diverse and pluralistic society, the importance of establishing

common bonds and a common language between citizens is clear. Equally important, however, is the American tradition of tolerance, a tradition that recognizes a critical difference between encouraging the use of English and repressing the use of other languages. Arizona's rejection of that tradition has severe consequences not only for its public officials and employees, but for the many thousands of Arizonans who would be precluded from receiving essential information from their state and local governments if the drastic prohibition contained in the provision were to be implemented. (*Yñiguez v. Arizonans for Official English*, 1995: 923)

Article 28 violated the First Amendment, the judges ruled, because it not only blocked the free expression of state employees, but also impeded the free flow of state services to limited-English-speakers. They rejected suggestions that the amendment merely sought to regulate expressive conduct – the choice of a medium to articulate ideas – rather than the content of speech itself:

[A] monolingual person does not have the luxury of making the expressive choice to communicate in one language or another. ... To call a prohibition that precludes the conveying of information to thousands of Arizonans in a language they can comprehend a mere regulation of 'mode of expression' is to miss entirely the basic point of First Amendment protections. (pp. 935–936)

The court was especially outraged by the idea of regulating communications between legislators and their constituents. 'Freedom of speech is the foundation of our democratic process,' wrote Judge Melvin Brunetti. 'By restricting the free communication of ideas between elected officials and the people they serve, Article XXVIII threatens the very survival of our democratic society' (p. 950).

Testifying on November 1 as the lone opposition witness to H.R. 123, Edward Chen of the American Civil Liberties Union reiterated the 9th Circuit's findings of law and extended its constitutional arguments beyond the First Amendment. He warned that English-only restrictions would also violate 'equal protection' guarantees under the Fifth and Fourteenth amendments, by 'discriminating against an already disadvantaged and powerless minority' (US House of Representatives, 1995b: 26). Where such groups are adversely affected by state action, the Supreme Court has required legislation to meet standards of 'strict scrutiny' – insisting that it be 'precisely tailored to serve a compelling government interest' (*Plyler v. Doe*, 1982: 217). For Official English, that proof was entirely lacking, Chen said. Proponents had demonstrated neither a need to restrict other

languages, nor any connection between this policy and their stated goals of promoting English proficiency, national unity, and government efficiency. Such legislation would have difficulty meeting even the lowest standard of judicial review, a 'rational basis test.'

While some disputes remained about the full sweep of H.R. 123, there was no question about most of its restrictions. Limited-English-speakers would no longer be permitted to interact with government in a language they could understand, for a wide range of purposes. These included casting ballots or reading the fine print of election materials; getting detailed information about federal benefits, tax laws, and business regulations; participating in most civil and administrative proceedings; receiving non-emergency publications from federal agencies; and corresponding with members of Congress or executive branch officials.

Besides jeopardizing their current access to government, the legislation would foreclose any expansion of efforts to meet their language needs. Already, as Chen explained, the lack of adequate services meant hardships for many whose English was limited:

Even in California, which has the most comprehensive set of laws in the nation aimed at providing language assistance by governmental agencies, it is not uncommon for a Vietnamese cancer patient to wait for hours in a Bay Area county hospital waiting room until a translator is available, for a five-year old son of a Chinese-speaking couple to choke and lapse into a coma because emergency dispatchers could not understand their calls for help, for Latino earthquake victims to receive no assistance from relief workers who do not speak Spanish, for a Cuban immigrant to be shot and killed by the police because no officer was available to command him to stop in Spanish, for Spanish-speaking workers to be disproportionately injured by workplace toxic hazards because of the lack of Spanish speaking [health and safety] inspectors, doctors and warnings, or for more than 50% of limited-English proficient students in California to receive no instruction in their native language. The harsh reality is that language minorities remain underserved and the national resources devoted to foreign language assistance, particularly outside of public education, are relatively minuscule. (US House of Representatives, 1995b: 19–20)

Passage of a federal English-only law could only exacerbate these problems.

Equally troubling was the indirect impact of the legislation. State and local adoption of Official English measures had tended to foster intolerance, making ordinary citizens feel justified in practicing *language vigilantism* (Bender, 1997). These episodes ranged from harassment of strangers on the

street – ‘This is America; speak English!’ – to exclusionist policies in employment and housing. Public officials also seized the opportunity to act on their prejudices, for example, by refusing to allow translators at school board meetings or barring foreign-language publications from public libraries (Crawford, 1992a). The trend seemed to accelerate in the mid-1990s, as Official English campaigns intensified:

- Business owners nationwide increased the use of speak-English-only rules in the workplace, defying guidelines of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (Fletcher, 1998).
- Tavern owners in Yakima, Washington, refused to serve patrons who conversed in Spanish, posting signs such as: *In the USA, It's English or Adios Amigo* (Bender, 1997).
- A judge hearing a child-custody case in Amarillo, Texas, accused a mother of abuse for speaking Spanish to her five-year-old daughter. ‘Now get this straight,’ he admonished. ‘The child will hear only English’ – or else (Verhovek, 1995).
- Police in Yonkers, New York, ticketed a Cuban-American truck driver for his inability to answer questions in English (Associated Press, 1999a).
- In Huntsville, Alabama, the county assessor refused to approve routine tax exemptions for Korean property owners whose English was limited (Associated Press, 1999b).
- Norcross, Georgia, authorities fined the pastor of a Spanish-speaking congregation for posting placards that allegedly violated an English-only sign ordinance (Verdes, 2000).

These incidents were hardly isolated. Nor were their effects limited to the individuals directly involved. Language vigilantism stemmed from a growing sense among Anglo-Americans – no doubt encouraged by the consideration of Official English legislation – that it was now appropriate, or even patriotic, to police the behavior of linguistic minorities. Far from unifying diverse communities, such bills had precisely the opposite effect.

English Plus Alternative

The House floor ‘debate’ on H.R. 123, which occupied most of August 1, 1996, was something of a misnomer. Confident in their majority, none of the bill’s supporters saw fit to answer the civil-rights objections, other than to insist that they were acting on the purest of motives – no racism here, just a desire to ‘empower.’ By and large, Republicans defined the issue as whether immigrants to the United States should be expected to

speak English, or whether they should be exempted from this requirement. 'Why are we even debating this?' asked Jan Meyers of Kansas. 'If any of us wanted to move to France or Japan, we would look awfully silly complaining about having to learn their local language. Why is it somehow a horrible violation of human rights to insist that people living here, and especially people who move here deliberately from elsewhere, learn our language?' (*Congressional Record*, 1996: H9758).

Opponents countered that, of course, all US residents needed to know English. But Americans also needed to recognize their own diversity, and the world's. To better appreciate other cultures and to thrive in a global economy, it made sense to encourage bilingualism: proficiency in English *Plus* other languages. José Serrano, a Puerto Rican Democrat from the Bronx, proposed a legislative substitute for H.R. 123 along these lines. The bill recognized English as the 'common language' of the United States – with no restrictive provisions – while instructing government to 'conserve and develop the Nation's linguistic resources by encouraging all residents of this country to learn or maintain skills in a language other than English' (p. H9757). Reactions to Serrano's English Plus measure divided along predictable partisan lines.

Democrats were generally supportive. 'Encouraging the use of world languages is critical if the United States is to remain a world economic leader,' argued Lucille Roybal-Allard of California, noting that 40 percent of large US corporations found a need to hire bilingual employees (p. H9766). Pat Williams of Montana stressed that this was not only an immigrant issue. 'Of these 300 plus so-called foreign languages that we have heard about,' he pointed out, 'almost half of them are native languages, indigenous languages to the original people of the United States, languages that were here hundreds of years before English' (p. H9756). Others said it was ironic to be passing an English-only bill just as international visitors arrived for the Olympic games in Atlanta. 'Are we so insecure about our heritage that we have to lash out at other languages?' asked Cynthia McKinney of Georgia (p. H9752).

Few Republicans addressed English Plus directly. But most seemed to agree with Charles Cannady of Florida, who characterized the proposal as 'government-sanctioned and enforced multiculturalism' (p. H9758). Their only concession was to accept a late amendment to H.R. 123 exempting the Native American Languages Act, a small grant program supporting language revitalization, from the bill's restrictions (see pp. 60–61, 80).¹² The majority declined, however, to spare numerous other language services for American Indians, Native Hawaiians, and Alaska Natives.

Toward the end of the long, contentious day, Newt Gingrich stepped

down from his Speaker's chair to join the debate, signaling the bill's importance to his party. National elections were approaching and Republicans planned to emphasize the issue in the fall campaign. Privately the House leadership had already distributed 'talking points' on Official English to members of the Republican caucus, recommending that they stress the issue with constituents back home. Now the Speaker rose to sum up the discussion. He reiterated the value of English to immigrants and of immigrants to the nation, before sounding a more ominous note:

[A]sk yourself, in an America where there are over 80 languages taught in the California schools as the primary language, not as the secondary language but as the primary language, in a country where in Seattle there are 75 languages being taught, in Chicago there are 100;¹³ this is not bilingualism, this is a level of confusion which, if it were allowed to develop for another 20 or 30 years, would literally lead, I think, to the decay of the core parts of our civilization. (p. H9768)

Looking to November, Gingrich was betting that the empowerment and Babel arguments would be a winning combination with white, middle-class voters. He counted on those gains to more than compensate for losses among linguistic minorities, who tended to vote Democratic anyway.

There was little suspense about the outcome of the legislation. The only questions involved its margin of victory and the number of lawmakers who would cross party lines. On final passage, Official English carried the House, 259 to 169. Eight out of 236 Republicans, mostly from diverse districts, voted against it; 35 of 198 Democrats, mostly from the South and Midwest, voted in favor (p. H9772).

Endgame

Until the House vote, the Clinton Administration had maintained its silence on H.R. 123. This led to speculation that the president might feel election-year pressure to go along, just as he acquiesced to the Republican welfare and immigration bills. After all, Clinton's position on the issue had wavered over the years. As governor of Arkansas in 1987, he signed an Official English measure into law. Then he had second thoughts and asked the legislature to pass a new version that included a guarantee of 'equal educational opportunities to all children' (*Ark. Ann. Code* §1-4-117). Speaking to a Hispanic audience during his 1992 campaign, Clinton offered regrets and excuses: 'I probably shouldn't have signed the one that passed, but it was passed by a veto-proof majority. I agreed to sign it

only after we changed the law to make it clearer that it would not affect bilingual education, something that I have always strongly supported' (Ifill, 1992). He failed to mention that bilingual education remains illegal in Arkansas under a 1931 law that authorizes fines of \$25 a day against teachers who violate the English-only policy¹⁴ (*Ark. Ann. Code* §6-16-104). Clinton did, however, support an expansion of the federal Bilingual Education Act in 1994. The new law placed a greater emphasis on developing skills in students' native language as well as English.

Now, with his re-election campaign in high gear, partisan considerations took precedence. With Official English, Gingrich had thrown down a gauntlet and the White House responded in kind. It issued a statement condemning H.R. 123 as 'unnecessary, inefficient and divisive,' and threatened a presidential veto if the measure passed the Senate (Associated Press, 1996).

Senate Republicans, however, took a more pragmatic approach than their ideological brethren in the House. Official English not only inspired less support, but encountered serious opposition from senators such as John McCain of Arizona, Pete Domenici of New Mexico, and Orrin Hatch of Utah. Though conservative, these Westerners had long cultivated Native Americans and more recently Latinos, whose votes were becoming decisive in close races. English-only measures seemed calculated to push ethnic minorities away from the Republican party. Speaking out against Article 28 in Arizona, Senator McCain said, 'I don't understand why we would want to pass some kind of initiative that a significant portion of our population considers an assault on their heritage' (Cheseborough, 1988).

Many average voters appeared to see Official English in a similar light. Whether or not the legislation was racist in its intent, that was the message that speakers of other languages usually received. Why pass divisive legislation that accomplished so little of a practical nature? As House members returned from the Congressional recess in September, they reported back to Gingrich that the issue seemed to promise little if any boost for Republicans. Voters were feeling less angry and more tolerant than in 1994.

Immediately Official English disappeared from the Republican radar screen. No further action was taken by the Senate and the House did not complain. Bob Dole had nothing more to say about language, although by that time his presidential bid was doomed in any case. Not only did Clinton win re-election, but the Republicans lost numerous Congressional seats, as voters reacted against their 'revolutionary' excesses. Presiding over a slimmer majority in the 105th Congress, Gingrich found it advantageous to project a more moderate image. While Official English bills were reintroduced, he made sure they never came to vote. Mean-

while, the Speaker's own views seemed to evolve on the matter of bilingualism and civilization. Within a year he was asking:

Do you realize that there are two hundred languages spoken in the Chicago school system? That's an asset, not a liability. You get Sally to speak Cambodian and Sally gets you to speak English. If they succeed, we give each of them a thousand dollars. We'd have kids practicing language seven days a week.¹⁵ (Klein, 1997)

Clearly, the political factors that brought Official English into the Republican fold had changed. English-only lobbies now found themselves on the outside looking in. And what they saw was not encouraging.

Staunch conservatives began to desert the cause. In 1998, US English and its chief competitor, English First, invested what remained of their political clout in an effort to block legislation authorizing a plebiscite on the political status of Puerto Rico. If residents of the island chose to become a state, they would no doubt continue to administer their affairs in Spanish – unless prohibited from doing so – and that might set an adverse precedent for Official English in the rest of the country. Other than ideologues, however, few Americans were worried about this hypothetical scenario. The House, led by a longtime English-only proponent, Dan Burton of Indiana, rejected English-only requirements as a condition of statehood. Ideology was forced to give way to substantive legislation.¹⁶

While these votes were proceeding in Washington, a more consequential campaign was raging in California. A ballot initiative known as English for the Children targeted bilingual education, the nation's most extensive language assistance program, in the state where it was most widely practiced. The measure passed in June 1998, without the involvement of the major English-only organizations (*see pp. 104–127*). Ironically, US English had always hesitated to mount a direct attack on programs serving children. To avoid the taint of extremism, Official English bills usually exempted language instruction of any kind. Now the assault on bilingual education, launched in the name of 'school reform,' appeared more mainstream than Official English.

Certainly it would be premature to write the obituary of the traditional English-only movement. The social and ideological currents that feed it remain much in evidence, and opinion polls still record majorities supporting English as the official language.¹⁷ Its proponents continue to raise and spend millions each year. They still score occasional successes in legislatures and at the polls (in 2000, Official English initiatives are under way in Utah and Oklahoma). Yet the experience of the 1990s suggests that the trend may have peaked. English-only fervor seems to

be waning, as more Americans begin to accept the reality of language diversity and to reject the efforts of wedge-wielding politicians.

Notes

1. Diamond later retracted this admission, which he made in a letter to the Internal Revenue Service that was reportedly never mailed. US English did not lose its 'charitable' 501(c)(3) tax status.
2. This was not how Mujica had identified himself on joining the US English board. In an interview at the time, I asked him how he, as a Hispanic, felt about Tanton's memo. The Chilean immigrant responded: 'I don't consider myself a Hispanic. I'm a Basque' (personal communication, 8 April 1992).
3. For example, a poll of 1000 registered voters by Tarrance Associates found 73 percent in favor of declaring English the official US language and 23 percent opposed (*US News and World Report*, 25 September 1995). A poll by Luntz Research for US English reported 86 percent of 1,208 registered voters in favor and 12 percent opposed (US English press release, 18 September 1995).
4. In 1996, 44 percent of the foreign-born had originated in Latin America, 27 percent in Asia, and 17 percent in Europe (Hansen and Faber, 1997).
5. No doubt this was a substantial undercount. Krauss (1995) estimates at least 40 more Native American languages than the 1990 census estimates.
6. In 1990, 52 percent of 8.4 million recent immigrants reported no difficulty with English; the comparable figure in 1980 was 41 percent of 5.3 million (Waggoner, 1995).
7. In all likelihood, the shift is as great or greater in the Southern California sample; at this writing, those results have yet to be published.
8. As the minority party, Democrats were allowed to call only one witness, Edward Chen of the American Civil Liberties Union. The proceedings were stacked in a different way by Republicans in the Senate. At the first hearing of the Governmental Affairs Committee, which commanded the lion's share of press coverage, only supporters of Official English were allowed to testify. Opponents' arguments were heard three months later, receiving limited attention.
9. These included language teaching, national security, international trade and diplomacy, health and safety, census activities, criminal proceedings (but only civil suits initiated by the government), and 'terms of art' from other languages (H.R. 123, §169).
10. This measure (P.L. 104-193), along with the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (P.L. 104-208), denied to legal 'resident aliens' many social benefits that were available to citizens.
11. The US Supreme Court later 'vacated' this ruling as moot because the plaintiff, María-Kelly F. Yñiguez, had left state employment (*Arizonans for Official English v. Arizona*, 1997). In any case, it added, this was a matter that should be litigated first in Arizona courts. Soon after, the Arizona Supreme Court unanimously struck down Article 28 on constitutional grounds nearly identical to those of the 9th Circuit (*Ruíz v. Hull*, 1998).
12. The potential impact on Native Americans became a key issue during Senate hearings on S. 356, chaired by Ted Stevens of Alaska. An Official English supporter, the senator was also known for his responsiveness to Native concerns. Indigenous groups from his home state and elsewhere stood firmly against

the bill, with one exception. Representatives of 'Aha Pūnana Leo Inc., a Hawaiian immersion preschool, offered to support the English-only measure if Congress would exempt indigenous languages and increase funding to help preserve them. The group endorsed a 1984 position paper by US English arguing that, while immigrants deserve no language rights in the United States, Native Americans are entitled to retain their ancestral tongues because they predate English (US Senate, 1996: 69–71). 'Aha Pūnana Leo submitted a revised English-only bill, complete with amendments targeting subsidies to its own activities (155–166). A deal was never consummated, however, as the proposal found no supporters among Official English sponsors. Meanwhile, it was roundly criticized by language minority advocates, including other Hawaiians.

13. Gingrich cited no sources for these figures. Not long before, the California Department of Education (1995) reported that bilingual teachers in that state were certified in seventeen languages – 96 percent of them in Spanish. In April 2000, according to Internet sites maintained by the school districts, the Chicago Public Schools offered bilingual programs in seventeen languages (<http://www.cps.k12.il.us/>). But Seattle schools had no full-fledged bilingual programs – only 'native language support,' primarily in Spanish (<http://www.seattleschools.org/>).
14. The Arkansas law, the most restrictive of its kind in the United States, no longer appears to be enforced. Six other states – Alabama, Delaware, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Nebraska, and West Virginia – also continue to mandate English as the basic language of instruction in public and (sometimes) private schools.
15. Apparently Gingrich was unfamiliar with two-way bilingual education, a pedagogy the Chicago Public Schools have helped to pioneer. In these programs English-proficient and limited-English-proficient students learn each others' languages, and no one has to bribe them to do so.
16. For reasons unrelated to language policy, the Senate failed to act on the Puerto Rico plebiscite bill.
17. The level of support seems to be declining, however. A March 2000 poll by Zogby International asked: 'Please tell me which of the following statements you most agree with: Statement A: English should be the official language of the US and no other language should be permitted in government correspondence, including election ballots, in court hearings, or information related to social, welfare, and health benefits. Statement B: By not offering information in the immigrants' native language, you are denying them their due rights to participate in this country's democratic process and the means to improve their standard of living.' It found 52 percent in favor of Official English and 41 percent opposed (Reuters, 2000).

Endangered Native American Languages: What Is To Be Done, and Why?

The threat to linguistic resources is now recognized as a worldwide crisis. According to Krauss (1992), as many as half of the estimated 6000 languages spoken on earth are 'moribund.' That is, they are spoken only by adults who no longer teach them to the next generation. An additional 40 percent may soon be threatened because the number of children learning them is declining measurably. In other words, 90 percent of existing languages today are likely to die or become seriously embattled within the next century. That leaves only about 600 languages, 10 percent of the world's total, that remain relatively secure – for now. This assessment is confirmed, with and without such detailed estimates, by linguists reporting the decline of languages on a global scale, but especially in the Americas, Africa, Australia, and Southeast Asia (Robins and Uhlenbeck, 1991; Brenzinger, 1992; Schmidt, 1990).

In formulating a response to this crisis, there are three questions that need to be explored: (1) What causes language decline and extinction? (2) Can the process be reversed? and (3) Why should we concern ourselves with this problem? Before attempting to provide answers, it would be helpful to look in detail at the situation of Native American languages in the United States.

The Crisis

Language loss has been especially acute in North America. No doubt scores, perhaps hundreds, of tongues indigenous to the continent have vanished since 1492. Some have perished without a trace. Others survived long enough for 20th century linguists to track down their last speakers and partially describe their grammars – for example, Mohican in Wisconsin, Catawba in South Carolina, Yana in California, Natchez in Louisiana, and Mashpi in Massachusetts (Swadesh, 1948).

While Krauss (1995) estimates that 175 indigenous languages are still spoken in the United States, he classifies 155 of these – 89 percent of the total – as moribund. Increasingly, young Native Americans grow up

speaking only English, learning at best a few words of their ancestral tongue. Out of twenty native languages still spoken in Alaska, only Central Yup'ik and St Lawrence Island Yup'ik are being transmitted to the next generation. Similarly, in Oklahoma only two of twenty-three Indian languages are being learned by children. All of the nearly fifty vernaculars indigenous to California are moribund; most are kept alive by small groups of elders (Hinton, 1994). Few of Washington State's sixteen Indian tongues are spoken by anyone under the age of sixty. Krauss (1995) projects that, nationwide, 155 of today's Native American languages will lose their last native speakers by 2050. Most of the twenty that remain, while viable at present, will soon be fighting to survive.

The imminence and scale of language extinction are well illustrated by the US Census Bureau (1993) estimate that more than one-third of American Indian and Alaska Native tongues had fewer than 100 home speakers in 1990.¹ And this is probably a conservative estimate of the threat, since the census has no way of measuring whether these are fluent speakers. It simply asks the rather vague and ambiguous question: 'Does this person speak a language other than English at home?' But not 'How well?' 'How often?' or 'Under what circumstances?'²

Rapid shift to English is evident even among speakers of the healthiest indigenous languages such as Navajo, a group that was historically isolated and thus among the slowest to become bilingual. As late as 1930, 71 percent of Navajos spoke no English, as compared with only 17 percent of all American Indians at the time (US Census Bureau, 1937). The number who report speaking at least some Navajo in the home remains substantial – 148,530 in 1990, or 45 percent of all Native American language speakers (US Census Bureau, 1993). But the percentage of Navajos who speak only English is growing, predictably among those who have migrated from their tribal homeland, but also among those who have remained. For Navajos living on the reservation, aged five and older, the proportion of English-only speakers rose from 7.2 percent in 1980 to 15.0 percent in 1990. For those aged five to seventeen, the increase was even more dramatic: from 11.8 percent to 28.4 percent (see Table 1). Among school-age children living on the reservation, the number of monolingual English speakers more than doubled, from 5103 to 12,207.

A 1992 tribal survey suggests even more rapid erosion. Among 3,328 Navajo kindergartners at 110 schools on or near the reservation, 32 percent spoke Navajo well, while 73 percent spoke English well. Only 16 percent were rated higher in Navajo than in English (Holm, 1993). These figures are quite ominous for the future viability of Navajo, long considered the most secure indigenous tongue in the United States.

Table 1 Tribal population and home language speakers, age 5+, Navajo reservation and trust lands (Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah), 1980–1990

1980	Age 5-17	%	Age 18+	%	Total	%
Population	43,121	100.0	65,933	100.0	109,054	100.0
Speak only English	5,103	11.8	2,713	4.1	7,816	7.2
Speak other language	38,018	88.2	63,220	95.9	101,238	92.8
1990						
Population	42,994	100.0	81,301	100.0	124,295	100.0
Speak only English	12,207	28.4	6,439	7.9	18,646	15.0
Speak other language	30,787	71.6	74,862	92.1	105,649	85.0

Source: US Census Bureau, 1989; 1994.

The crisis of Native American languages can be summarized as follows: Unless current trends are reversed, and soon, the number of extinctions seems certain to increase. Numerous tongues – perhaps one-third of the total – are on the verge of disappearing along with their last elderly speakers, and many others are not far behind. Even the most vigorous 10 percent have a weakening hold upon the young. In short, Native American languages are becoming endangered species.

What Causes Language Death?

Obvious parallels have been drawn between the extinction of languages and the extinction of plants and animals. In all probability, like the majority of creatures in natural history, the majority of languages in human history have passed from the scene:³ they have fallen victim to predators, changing environments, or more successful competitors. Moreover, the pace of extinction is clearly accelerating both for languages and for biological species. In the past, despite a few exceptional periods (e.g. the late Mesozoic era, when the dinosaurs died out), the process has proceeded discretely and locally. Today, by contrast, it is proceeding generically and globally. We appear to have entered a period of mass extinctions – a threat to diversity in our natural ecology and also in what might be called our cultural ecology.

Wilson (1992) has estimated that before industrialism began to affect tropical rain forests, roughly one in a million plants and animals there became extinct each year; today the rate is between one in a thousand and one in a hundred. Instead of individual species facing difficulties in

particular habitats, suddenly we are seeing a generalized threat to many species, such as the well-publicized extinction of frogs in diverse environments.

Naturally we do not have similar estimates for the rate of language extinction. Because languages leave no fossil record, there is no way to calculate the rate at which they died out in the past. But the phenomenon of language death is strikingly similar – and causally linked – to the death of biological species. Modern cultures, abetted by new technologies, are encroaching on once-isolated peoples, with drastic effects on their ways of life and on the environments they inhabit. Destruction of lands and livelihoods; the spread of consumerism, individualism, and other Western values; pressures for assimilation into dominant cultures; and conscious policies of repression directed at indigenous groups – these are among the factors threatening the world's biodiversity as well as its cultural and linguistic diversity.

How does a language die? One obvious way is that its speakers can perish through disease or genocide. This was the fate, for example, of most languages spoken by the Arawak peoples of the Caribbean, who disappeared within a generation of their first contact with Christopher Columbus. But such cases are relatively rare. More often language death is the culmination of language shift, resulting from a complex of internal and external pressures that induce a speech community to adopt a language spoken by others. These may include changes in values, rituals, or economic and political life resulting from trade, migration, intermarriage, religious conversion, or military conquest. Some describe these as 'changes in the ecology of languages' (Wurm, 1991) – continuing the comparison with natural species – a Darwinian model suggesting that languages must adapt or perish.

Here the analogy begins to become misleading. Unlike natural species, languages have no genes and thus carry no mechanism for natural selection. Their prospects for survival are determined not by any intrinsic traits, or capacity for adaptation, but by social forces alone. As a practical matter, in discussing language shift it is probably impossible to avoid biomorphic metaphors like *ecology*, *survival*, *death*, *extinction*, and *genocide* (certainly if one judges from this article thus far). But unless we remain vigilant, such metaphors can lead us into semantic traps, and these traps have political consequences.

Conceiving language loss as a Darwinian process implies that some languages are fitter than others, that the 'developed' will survive and the 'primitive' will go the way of the dinosaurs. While I know of no linguist who makes such an argument, there are plenty of laypersons who do. (And such voices are heeded by legislators, as testified by the

advance of the English-only movement since the mid-1980s.) Some researchers who specialize in language death have helped to perpetuate this misunderstanding by ignoring its social and historical causes. By focusing exclusively on 'structural-linguistic' factors, they imply 'that a language can "kill itself" by becoming so impoverished that its function as an adequate means of communication is called into question' (Sasse, 1992: 10–11). The research literature demonstrates precisely the opposite: such changes in the structure of a language are the result, not the cause, of language decline.

In a related vein, several scholars have raised the question: 'Language murder or language suicide?' (e.g. Edwards, 1985) – as if it were possible to separate external and internal factors in language loss and thereby assess blame. According to the *suicide hypothesis*, a language community (say, the Irish) opts to abandon its native tongue out of self-interest (to enjoy the superior opportunities open to English speakers) rather than in response to coercion. As Denison (1977: 21) asserts, a speech community

sometimes 'decides,' for reasons of functional economy, to suppress a part of itself. ... [T]here comes a point when multilingual parents no longer consider it necessary or worthwhile for the future of their children to communicate with them in a low-prestige language variety, and when children are no longer motivated to acquire active competence in a language which is lacking in positive connotations such as youth, modernity, technical skills, material success, education. The languages at the lower end of the prestige scale retreat from ever increasing areas of their earlier functional domains, displaced by higher prestige languages, until *there is nothing left for them to be appropriately used about*. In this sense they may be said to 'commit suicide.' (emphasis in original)

Certainly language choices are made, in the final analysis, by speakers themselves. But this 'explanation' of language death explains little about the social forces underlying such choices. Whether deliberate or not, the notion of language suicide fosters a victim-blaming strategy. It reinforces the ethnocentric prejudice, all too common among dominant groups, that certain languages are unfit to survive in the modern world. At best, it encourages the prevalent worldwide response to threatened cultures: malign neglect.

Yet 'murder,' too, has been overrated as a cause of language extinction. This is due in part to the popular notion that conquerors 'naturally' force their languages on others. Some scholars have also favored the *murder hypothesis*, for example, in explaining the spread of Indo-European languages. The traditional account is that, over a relatively brief period –

roughly the 4th millennium BC – bands of warriors armed with superior technology (and in some versions, with superior ‘racial’ traits) charged out of the Russian steppes (or Asia Minor or Northern Europe) to defeat indigenous peoples from India to Ireland and impose their own Proto-Indo-European vernacular(s).⁴

Renfrew (1987) has cast strong doubts on this hypothesis. Invoking archaeological as well as linguistic evidence, he argues that Proto-Indo-European advanced more gradually, through the expansion of agriculture, beginning as early as 6500 BC. Farming supports considerably larger populations than hunting and gathering, but also requires constant migration in search of arable land. Thus, instead of spreading their language(s) primarily by conquest, it is more likely that Indo-Europeans overwhelmed other language communities with superior numbers. Europe’s original inhabitants (with exceptions such as the Basques) either adopted the newcomers’ way of life, including their speech, or perished trying to compete with it. In this scenario demographic, cultural, and economic changes, rather than military factors played the key roles in language extinction. While the debate over Indo-European origins continues, Renfrew’s hypothesis is more consistent with sociolinguistic evidence about language shift.

In sum, the murder versus suicide dichotomy is overly simplistic. It also lends support to those who would justify the colonizer’s prerogative to coerce assimilation or who would blame the victims for acquiescing. Languages die from both internal and external causes, operating simultaneously. On the one hand, the process reflects forces beyond its speakers’ control: repression, discrimination, or exploitation by other groups (and in many situations, all three). On the other hand, except in the case of physical genocide, languages never succumb to outside pressures alone. There must be complicity on the part of speech community itself, changes in attitudes and values that discourage teaching its vernacular to children and encourage loyalty to the dominant tongue.

Take the example of Native American languages, which were targeted by the US government in a campaign of linguistic genocide. In 1868, a federal commission on making peace with the plains Indians concluded: ‘In the difference of language to-day lies two-thirds of our trouble. ... Schools should be established, which children should be required to attend; their barbarous dialects should be blotted out and the English language substituted’ (Atkins, 1887: 18).

By the 1880s this policy was institutionalized in a system of boarding schools for Indian children (*see pp. 68–69*). Under strict English-only rules, students were punished and humiliated for speaking their native tongues, part of a broader campaign to erase every vestige of their

Indian-ness. Albert H. Kneale, a teacher in the early 1900s, explained that the Indian schools 'went on the assumption that any Indian custom was, per se, objectionable, whereas the customs of whites were the ways of civilization. ... [Children] were taught to despise every custom of their forefathers, including religion, language, songs, dress, ideas, methods of living' (Reyhner, 1992: 45).

When John Collier was appointed commissioner of Indian Affairs in 1933, he condemned and prohibited these ethnocentric practices. He even sought to encourage the use of Native American languages (Szasz, 1977). Nevertheless, English-only rules and punishments persisted unofficially for another generation, as many former students can attest.

In the short term, the coercive assimilation policy met with limited success in eradicating Indian languages. Brutality of this kind naturally breeds resistance and determination to defend the culture under attack. Moreover, the isolation and exclusion of most Indians from the dominant society made assimilation seem like a poor bargain indeed. Whether or not students excelled in Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) schools and embraced the dominant culture, on graduation they were rarely welcomed by white society. Over time, however, the English-only policy did take a toll on the pride and identity of many Indians, alienating them from their cultural roots and from their tribes, and giving them little or nothing in return. Being punished for speaking the ancestral language often devalued it in their own minds and some internalized the stigma of inferiority. This has left a legacy of opposition to bilingual education among not a few Indian parents, who vividly remember the pain they suffered in school and hope to shield their children from the same experience (Crawford, 1999).

Yet, while the English-only boarding schools did damage to the status of indigenous languages within their own communities, other factors may have exerted a stronger influence. The advent of a cash economy, government services, and in some cases industrial employment, along with the penetration of once-remote reservations by English-language media (especially television and videocassette recorders), have created new pressures and enticements for Native Americans to enter the wider society, or at least to abandon the old ways (*see pp. 71–73*).

Returning again to the example of the Navajo, we can see that language shift began to accelerate *after* the BIA abandoned its punitive English-only policy. That is, linguistic assimilation seems to have proceeded more efficiently on a *laissez-faire* basis than it did through coercion. The more parents encounter the dominant culture, the more they tend to raise their children mostly or entirely in English, the language of access to that culture. Thus every step toward modernization – and away from tradi-

tion – puts the indigenous tongue at a greater disadvantage. Gradually its sphere of usage contracts to home and hearth, religious rituals, and tribal ceremonies. *Diglossia*, or stable bilingualism, offers a theoretical antidote to language loss (*for an example, see pp. 77–78*). But the odds for maintaining this balance decline to the extent that traditional cultures decline, thereby shrinking the domains of the ancestral tongue.

How should we conceptualize the causes of language shift? Rather than rely on Darwinian metaphors, Fishman (1991) offers criteria with fewer semantic pitfalls. In place of changing ecology, he cites ‘dislocations’ – physical, economic, social, and cultural – affecting a language community. These include a group’s dispersal from its historic homeland, subordination to a socioeconomic system in which its tongue commands minimal power and prestige, and the weakening of traditional bonds through contact with modern, atomized democracies that elevate individual freedom over communal values. While our understanding of language loss is still far from complete, Fishman’s categories – more than any others I have discovered – provide a useful framework for investigation.

Is There a Cure?

What, if anything, can be done to cope with this crisis? Is it possible to rescue languages now on the verge of extinction, or perhaps even to resuscitate some that are no longer spoken? This latter idea is not so far-fetched when one considers the example of Hebrew – a ‘dead’ language for nearly 2000 years when it was brought back to life in modern Israel; Hebrew today has several million speakers. Some Native American groups have expressed interest in doing the same thing. Recently the Coquille tribe of Oregon sought funding for a project to revive the Miluk language, using tape recordings from the 1930s of its last living speakers (US Senate, 1992: 29).

Of course, it would be hard to find a community whose language is threatened today that commands the level of resources the State of Israel devoted to the cause of reviving Hebrew. So the question of whether this kind of effort can succeed is very relevant. If there is little hope of preventing the extinction of a language, a revitalization project may be ill-advised; limited funds might be better spent on other social and educational programs. On the other hand, if endangered languages can be saved, there is little time for delay in the name of budgetary constraints.

During the 1980s several tribes recognized the urgency of this task. The Navajo, Tohono O’odham, Pasqua Yaqui, Northern Ute, Arapaho, and Red Lake Band of Chippewa were among those that adopted policies

designed to promote the use of their ancestral tongues in reservation schools and government functions. Ironically, in most cases the English-only movement sounded the alarm bells that energized Indian leaders (Crawford, 1992a).

While these tribal language policies are an important first step, their implementation has been uneven. To succeed, language renewal projects require not only good intentions but enormous practical efforts. Some tribes still need expert help to complete orthographies, grammar books, and dictionaries. Virtually all need assistance in developing and publishing curriculum materials. Bilingual education programs at community-run schools like Rough Rock, Arizona, on the Navajo reservation are a major (if under-utilized) tool for promoting native-language literacy (McLaughlin, 1992). Another key task is teacher training, complicated by the fact that Indian-language speakers often lack academic credentials, while outsiders lack essential cultural and linguistic knowledge. As a result these projects must draw on resources that are available on reservations, relying especially on elders, the true experts in these languages.

Tribal initiative and control are essential to the success of revitalization efforts because language choices are a matter of consensus within each community. They are extremely difficult to impose from without. 'All-important is the peoples' will to restore their native languages,' Krauss maintains, citing his experiences at the Alaska Native Language Center in Fairbanks (US Senate, 1992: 21). If endangered languages are to be saved, it is crucial for native speakers to see the value of doing so and to get actively involved in the process.

At the same time language renewal faces a perennial barrier to social progress on Indian reservations: scarcity of funding. Such projects must compete with other, usually more pressing priorities like health care, housing, schooling, and economic development. Most tribes, lacking a local tax base, have historically relied on federal help in addressing these needs. But since 1980 the federal government has cut back substantially on its support of Indian programs in general.

On the other side of the ledger, Congress did pass the Native American Languages Acts of 1990 and 1992. These laws articulate a government policy of protecting indigenous languages and authorize a grant program for that purpose. While some federal help was previously available through the National Science Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Department of Education, for the first time the 1992 Act made tribal governments eligible for funding to carry out language conservation and renewal. Yet Congress was slow to fund the program. Finally, in the fall of 1994, the Clinton Administration awarded

\$1 million in grants to launch eighteen language revitalization projects nationwide – a meager amount, but still a beginning.

Implementation of the 1990 Act has also been half-hearted. Among other things, it called upon all agencies of the federal government – including the departments of Interior, Education, and Health and Human Services – to review their activities in consultation with tribes, traditional leaders, and educators to make sure they comply with the policy of conserving Native American languages. By the fall of 1991, the executive branch was required to report back to Congress on what was being done and to recommend further changes in law and policy. But the Bush Administration ignored these provisions, and the Clinton Administration similarly failed to conduct the mandated review. After some prodding by the Senate Select Committee on Indian Affairs, the matter was referred to the BIA, whose only response has been to compile a list of bilingual education programs in its schools (a rather short list, at this writing). So, although the federal government now has a strong policy statement on file favoring the preservation of indigenous tongues, the real-world impact has thus far been limited.

The question remains: Is there a realistic chance of reversing the erosion of Native American languages? In theory, this goal is quite possible to achieve, as we know from the miraculous revival of Hebrew, among others. Heroic efforts are now being made on behalf of languages with just a few elderly speakers, for example, by the Advocates for Indigenous California Language Survival (Hinton, 1994; Feldman, 1993). For other languages, especially those still being learned by children, taught in bilingual education programs, and receiving tribal support, there is considerable hope. Overall, however, limited progress is being made in retarding the pace of language shift. This bleak situation is unlikely to change without a stronger commitment at all levels and without a substantial infusion of new resources. To put it bluntly, a decisive factor in the survival of Native American languages will be politics, a sore but necessary subject to which we now turn.

Why Should We Care?

Why concern ourselves with the problem of endangered Native American languages, to the extent of investing the considerable time, effort, and resources that would be needed to save even a handful of them? Posing the question in this way may seem callous, considering the shameful history of cultural genocide practiced against indigenous peoples in this country. But, for many non-Indians, who tend to view linguistic diversity as a liability rather than an asset, the value of these languages is not

self-evident. Knowledge about Native American issues in general is limited. Meanwhile assimilationist biases remain strong; hence the symbolic opposition these days to any kind of public expenditure aimed at preserving 'ethnic' cultures (Crawford, 1992a). Until such attitudes are changed – by effectively answering the question, 'Why should we care about revitalizing Native American languages?' – there will be limited progress in conservation and renewal.

Advocates have advanced a variety of answers. Let us consider them on both their scientific merits and their political appeal.

(1) Linguists, who are increasingly vocal on this issue, have warned that the death of any natural language represents an incalculable loss to their science. 'Suppose English were the only language available as a basis for the study of general human grammatical competence,' writes Hale (1992: 35). While 'we could learn a great deal ... we also know enough about linguistic diversity to know that we would miss an enormous amount.' No doubt few who are acquainted with this problem would disagree: from a scientific standpoint, the destruction of data is always regrettable. Losing a language means losing an irreplaceable window on the human mind. But from the perspective of the public and policy-makers, this argument smacks of professional self-interest; few taxpayers are likely to find it a compelling justification for public spending.

(2) Others have argued that the loss of linguistic diversity represents a loss of intellectual diversity. Each language is a unique tool for analyzing and synthesizing the world, incorporating the knowledge and values of a speech community. Linguistic 'categories [including] number, gender, case, tense, mode, voice, "aspect," and a host of others ... are not so much discovered in experience as imposed upon it' (Sapir, 1931). Thus to lose such a tool is to 'forget' a way of constructing reality, to blot out a perspective evolved over many generations. The less variety there is in language, the less variety there will be in ideas. Again, a Darwinian analogy:

Evolutionary biologists recognize the great advantage held by species that maintain the greatest possible diversity. Disasters occur when only one strain of wheat or corn, a 'monoculture' is planted everywhere. With no variation, there is no potential to meet changing conditions. In the development of new science concepts, a 'monolanguage' holds the same dangers as a monoculture. Because languages partition reality differently, they offer different models of how the world works. There is absolutely no reason why the metaphors provided in English are superior to those of other languages. (Schrock, 1986: 14)

Theoretically this sounds plausible; yet such effects are impossible to quantify. Who can say whether a concept that evolved in one language

would never have evolved in another? The extreme version of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis – that perception and cognition are determined by the structure of whatever language one happens to speak – has been demolished by Chomskyan linguistics (see, e.g. Pinker, 1994). Its more flexible version, ‘linguistic relativity,’ is another matter. Few would dispute that culture, influenced by language, influences thought. Yet the impact remains too elusive, too speculative, to rally public concern about language loss.

(3) Then there is the cultural pluralist approach: language loss is ‘part of the more general loss being suffered by the world, the loss of diversity in all things’ (Hale, 1992: 3). While this argument is politically potent – with lots of cosmopolitan appeal – it is scientifically dubious. For at least one linguist working to save endangered languages, such ‘statements ... are appeals to our emotions, not to our reason’ (Ladefoged, 1992: 810). Again the biological analogy breaks down. From the loss of natural species, scientists are continually documenting ripple effects that harm our global ecosystem. No such evidence is available for the loss of linguistic ‘species,’ which are not physically interdependent and which ‘evolve’ in very different ways. No doubt it would be interesting to know more about extinct languages like Sumerian, Hittite, Etruscan, and even Anglo-Saxon. But how can we regard their disappearance as a global catastrophe? As for the threat to human diversity in general, ‘the world is remarkably resilient ...; different cultures are always dying while new ones arise’ (Ladefoged, 1992: 810). Indeed, this resilience is the basis for linguistic diversity itself.

(4) A final – and, in my view, the most effective – line of argument appeals to the nation’s broader interest in social justice. We should care about preventing the extinction of languages because of the human costs to those most directly affected. ‘The destruction of a language is the destruction of a rooted identity’ (Fishman, 1991: 4) for both groups and individuals. Along with the accompanying loss of culture, language loss can destroy a sense of self-worth, limiting human potential and complicating efforts to solve other problems, such as poverty, family breakdown, school failure, and substance abuse. After all, language death does not happen in privileged communities. It happens to the dispossessed and the disempowered, peoples who most need their cultural resources to survive.

In this context, indigenous language renewal takes on an added significance. It becomes something of value not merely to academic researchers, but to native speakers themselves. This is true even in extreme cases where a language seems beyond repair. As one linguist sums up a project

to revive Adnyamathanha, an Australian Aboriginal tongue that had declined to about twenty native speakers:

It was not the success in reviving the language – although in some small ways [the program] did that. It was success in reviving something far deeper than the language itself – that sense of worth in being Adnyamathanha, and in having something unique and infinitely worth hanging onto. (D. Tunbridge, quoted in Schmidt, 1990: 106)

Notes

1. 'Native North American languages' comprised 136 different groupings; of these, 47 were spoken in the home by fewer than 100 persons; an additional 22 were spoken by fewer than 200.
2. Without an interviewer to explain the purpose of the home-language question, it has elicited unintended responses. The extent of language shift may be understated through misinterpretations, such as: *Can this person speak, at any level of proficiency, a language other than English?* or *Does this person ever speak another language at home?* So persons with limited proficiency, such as those who have studied a foreign language in school, are often counted as minority language speakers. In the 1980 Census, for example, 28 percent of self-reported 'Spanish speakers' in the home were not of Hispanic ethnicity – a 'totally untenable' finding, according to Veltman (1988: 19, 131). Moreover, self-reports have been shown to be unreliable when compared with objective measures of language proficiency (Hakuta and D'Andrea, 1992). Often they are contaminated by ethnic feelings, such as pride in the native language. Ambiguous questions provide even more room for subjective assessments.

On the other hand, census officials have acknowledged a significant undercount of minority groups, including Native Americans. Those living in remote areas are least likely to be counted; in the past, large numbers of census forms have piled up, unclaimed, at reservation trading posts. Such Indians are less likely to speak only English in the home; so undercounting them tends to overstate the extent of language shift. Another possible distortion, especially for small populations, is that language estimates are based on a 16 percent sample. A survey conducted by linguists and indigenous speakers in California turned up several Indian languages missed entirely by the 1990 census (Hinton, 1994).

On balance, however, the last two decennial censuses probably overstate the extent of proficiency in (and usage of) languages other than English. Fortunately, the questions were asked consistently in 1980 and 1990. So at least the trends of language loyalty and shift may be reliably plotted on the basis of comparable data. Unfortunately, no home language question was asked before 1980.

3. Krauss speculates that 10,000 years ago there may have been as many as 15,000 languages spoken worldwide – 2.5 times as many as today (Schwartz, 1994).
4. Of course, this idea predates the advent of linguistic archaeology. In 1492, Antonio de Nebrija completed a Castilian grammar book, the first ever completed of a European language. When he presented it to Queen Isabella and she asked, 'What is it for?' the Bishop of Avila answered for him: 'Your Majesty, language is the perfect instrument of empire.' Thus began a 300-year

attempt by Spanish monarchs to repress and replace indigenous languages in the New World. Yet, despite repeated edicts from Madrid, the policy was frequently ignored by Spanish priests and civil officials, who found it easier to pursue their work through indigenous *lingua francas* like Nahuatl and Quechua (Heath, 1972). A US commissioner of Indian Affairs similarly invoked the conqueror's prerogative to justify linguistic repression in North America:

All are familiar with the recent prohibitory order of the German Empire forbidding the teaching of the French language in either public or private schools in Alsace and Lorraine. Although the population is almost universally opposed to German rule, they are firmly held to German political allegiance by the military hand of the Iron Chancellor. If the Indians were in Germany or France or any other civilized country, they should be instructed in the language there used. As they are in an English-speaking country they must be taught the language which they must use in transacting business with the people of this country. No unity or community of feeling can be established among different peoples unless they are brought to speak the same language, and thus become imbued with like ideas of duty. (Atkins, 1887: 20.)

Seven Hypotheses on Language Loss

If not for its real-world consequences, the English-only movement would be an amusing spectacle, not unlike the cult surrounding UFOs. So many Anglo-Americans are obsessing about an alien threat to their language that one might think minority tongues were gaining in power and status at the expense of English. According to objective evidence, however, precisely the opposite is true. In the most extensive study of language choices ever conducted in this country, the demographer Calvin Veltman (1983) concluded that, without the replenishing effects of immigration, all languages other than English would gradually die out in this country – with the possible exception of Navajo. I regret to report that Veltman would probably drop the qualifier today, following two decades of rapid erosion for Navajo and other indigenous languages.

How do we know when a language is threatened? The most obvious sign is that the number of its speakers is shrinking, along with the community it defines. This pattern is quite evident among Native Americans, as well as among ‘old immigrant’ groups who speak European tongues other than Spanish. Here are some other symptoms:

- Rates of fluency in the native language increase with age, as younger community members prefer to speak another (usually the dominant societal) language.
- Usage declines in *domains* where the native language was once secure – for example, in churches, schools, the cultural sphere, and most important, the home.
- Growing numbers of parents fail to teach the native language to their children.¹

When I first started reporting on bilingual education in the mid-1980s, language loss was not perceived to be a problem among tribes such as the Navajo, Hualapai, Crow, and Tohono O’odham, which still have substantial populations of native speakers, at least among adults. But in recent years, educators have noticed a sharp decline in native-language skills among the children of these tribes. It seems that even when bilingual programs produce strong academic results, there is not much impact on

the rate at which students lose the *heritage language*. Despite the end of punitive English-only policies in Indian schools and the advent of bilingual education, especially since the mid-1970s, the shift to English is accelerating in many Indian communities. Why is this happening now?

At the outset it should be noted that, so far, no one has developed a comprehensive theory of this phenomenon – what causes language shift under varying conditions, what prevents it from happening, what can help to reverse it – although I believe that Joshua Fishman (1991) has gone further than anyone else in doing so. Linguists in general have neglected this area. Fortunately, a number of them are waking up to the fact that Native American languages are fast disappearing and that expert help will be essential in saving them from extinction.

In presenting my own working hypotheses about this crisis, I will draw on historical research into US language policy and on anecdotal observations from my visits to Native American communities. These hypotheses will attempt to explain some of the numerous factors involved in language shift and in efforts to reverse it.

Hypothesis 1: Language Shift is Very Difficult to Impose from Without

We know that languages can die. Can they be ‘murdered’? As testified by the history of the Americas since Columbus arrived, the answer is yes. Nevertheless, this crime is more difficult to commit than many believe. One sure-fire way to murder a language is to murder its speakers, to commit linguistic genocide by means of biological genocide. Since these catastrophes leave no survivors, few have been well documented. One exception is the case of Ishi, the last speaker of the Yana language, whose tribe was systematically hunted down and exterminated by California settlers in the late 19th century. We know Ishi’s story because he, alone of his people, managed to evade the slaughter and hide for many years in the wilderness of northern California. Later he became a subject of fascination to anthropologists, living out his last years on exhibit in a San Francisco museum, where he contracted tuberculosis and died in 1916 (Kroeber, 1961). In many respects his case is unique.

Usually languages die in more complex and gradual ways, through the assimilation of their speakers into other cultures. Numerous factors are involved. Among those cited in the United States are English-only policies in Indian schools, the advent of English-language media, wage labor, and consumerism, and other assaults on traditional cultures. But the roles of such mechanisms have yet to be studied extensively. We do know that this process used to take a long time, often several generations, as a

community passed through transitional stages of bilingualism. Today the pace of language shift appears to be accelerating dramatically, both in the United States and worldwide (*see pp.* 52–54).

Repression alone, however, cannot fully explain the decline of minority tongues, for the simple reason that people resist. Language is the ultimate consensual institution. Displacing a community's vernacular is equivalent to displacing its deepest systems of belief – not an easy task. Even when individuals consent to assimilation in other ways, it is excruciating to give up a native language. This is increasingly true as we grow older, because language is tied so closely to our sense of self: personality, ways of thinking, group identity, religious beliefs, and cultural rituals, formal and informal. Such human qualities are resistant to change at the point of a gun; witness the survival of numerous tongues through centuries of repression.

This principle can be seen in the history of Indian education in the United States. Following the advice of the Indian Peace Commission of 1868, the US government embarked on an explicit policy of cultural genocide. Its officials spoke candidly about the need to eradicate Native American languages and substitute English in their place, so as to 'civilize the Indians' and contain them on reservations (Atkins, 1887). Coercive assimilation was seen as a less expensive and more humane alternative to military action.

This policy was not merely an outgrowth of racism, although racism clearly played a role. It grew out of a school of thought known as *social evolutionism*, which held that human cultures evolve through predetermined stages, from savagery to barbarism to civilization. According to this theory, it was both inevitable and desirable for 'lower' cultures to die out and be replaced by 'higher' cultures – and for lower languages to give way to higher languages (Fear, 1980). This was the orthodox view among late 19th century anthropologists. Perhaps the most influential of these was John Wesley Powell, a disabled Civil War veteran who explored the Colorado River, learned to speak several Native American languages, and founded the Bureau of American Ethnology. Powell believed that humanity was evolving toward a single world language. As an amateur linguist, he was eager to study indigenous languages before they died out. Nevertheless, he viewed them as primitive instruments and had no regrets about their impending extinction (Powell, 1881).

For its part, the US government saw nothing wrong with helping this 'natural' process along. By the late 1880s, it mandated the use of English at all times by Indian students, not only in its own schools but also in those operated by missionaries. Children who resisted were punished, often severely. Indian Commissioner J.D.C. Atkins explained the government's rationale:

These languages may be, and no doubt are, interesting to the philologist, but as a medium for conveying education and civilization to savages they are worse than useless; they are a means of keeping them in their savage condition by perpetuating the traditions of carnage and superstition. (US Indian Office, 1888: 15)

The English-only policy was bitterly opposed by missionaries, who had long ago discovered the effectiveness of using native languages for both educational and religious purposes. In the words of Stephen Riggs, founder of the Dakota Mission to the Sioux, 'men's hearts are reached through their understanding.' Native languages not only provided pathways to belief; for Riggs they were of 'divine origin' (Fear, 1980: 20). Ultimately, however, because the religious schools relied so heavily on government funding, they were forced to adopt the English-only policy.

According to Lieutenant Richard Henry Pratt, a cavalry officer and architect of the federal boarding school system, the strategy was 'kill the Indian ... and save the man' (Pratt, [1892] 1973). Killing the language was seen as a necessary means to this end. By insulating children from any kind of Indian influence, Pratt believed, they could be indoctrinated with the same culture, values, and language as white Anglo-American children. But the process proved more difficult than he had anticipated. Sometimes the English-only policy worked with young children if they were removed from their communities and sent to a remote boarding school; naturally they would tend to forget the tribal tongue. But Pratt also planned for these students to graduate, return to the reservation, and convert their tribes to 'civilized' norms, including the use of English. This seldom occurred. Most returning students were either shunned for their alien ways or drawn back to the tribal culture (Reyhner and Eder, 1989).

Federal officials soon became impatient with the pace of change, and Pratt's optimism about remolding the Indian fell out of favor. It was replaced with theories of racial inferiority that pronounced Native peoples incapable of full assimilation (an indictment that was directed at certain immigrant groups as well). After 1900, Indian education began to focus mainly on the manual arts and to lower expectations for academic achievement among Indian students (Hoxie, 1984). Still, the government's determination to forcibly impose English persisted until the 1930s, when John Collier became commissioner of Indian affairs.

Collier was far more respectful of Indian cultures, religions, and languages than his predecessors, and in 1934 he ordered the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) to stop interfering with them. He even authorized some experiments with bilingual instruction among the Navajo, Sioux, and other tribes. But these faltered for lack of teachers who were profi-

cient in the native language and because of budget cuts brought on by World War II (Szasz, 1977).

Collier also tried, without much success, to promote adult literacy in Navajo. This had seemed like an ideal plan to BIA officials, who were simultaneously pushing an unpopular program of 'stock reduction' – limiting the number of sheep per family – as a way to conserve the soil. Federal bureaucrats, with a strong faith in the written word, believed that if government directives could be distributed in Navajo, they would somehow have more persuasive power and Navajo ranchers would acquiesce in the reduction of their herds. This did not prove to be the case; neither literacy nor stock reduction caught on. Some believe that the BIA's initiative actually soured Navajos on the idea of learning to read and write their language, by associating Navajo literacy with an unpopular and dictatorial government program. Meanwhile, despite Collier's policy changes at the top, many BIA schools continued to maintain English-only rules and to punish children for violating them well into the 1960s, apparently without much interference from Washington.

What was the overall impact of this policy on language choices? To my knowledge, no one has systematically studied the question, although there is no shortage of anecdotal evidence. Many Indians cite the BIA boarding school experience, with its coercive approach to English, as the number one factor in Native language loss. But as Wayne Holm of the Navajo Division of Education has pointed out, many tribal members who hold this view – people who attended BIA schools themselves – remain fluent speakers of Navajo, although often their children do not. Most, if not all, of the boarding school 'survivors' that I have interviewed recall proudly their defiance of English-only rules, usually at the risk of harsh punishments.

Some argue, more plausibly, that the boarding school experience has had a delayed effect, inducing shame among many Indians about their culture, or at least convincing them that their languages are a source of educational difficulties. Thus on becoming parents themselves, they have tended to raise their children primarily in English, hoping this would help them in school. In my observation, such practices are not uncommon among Indian parents even today (Crawford, 1999). But the question remains: did negative attitudes toward the native language come primarily from repressive school policies or from other messages that Indians receive from the dominant culture?

Holm notes that language loss among the Navajo began to accelerate in the 1970s and 1980s, among children whose parents started school in the 1950s and 1960s. By that time public schools greatly outnumbered BIA schools on the reservation. Though they used English as the sole medium

of instruction, public schools generally did not practice repressive language policies. Moreover, they promoted an ideology quite distinct from that of BIA schools – one more in line with modernity, economic development, and social integration. It may be that these latter forces affect traditional cultures in more insidious and more devastating ways than direct coercion.

Hypothesis 2: Language Shift is Determined Primarily by Changes Internal to Language Communities Themselves

Language usage frequently changes in response to external pressures – or ‘dislocations’, to use Fishman’s useful term. Such factors can surely weaken the bonds that hold communities together. Yet ultimately it is the speakers themselves who are responsible, through their attitudes and choices, for what happens to their native language. Families choose to speak it in the home and teach it to their children, or they don’t. Elders remember to speak the language on certain important occasions and insist on its use in certain important domains, or they don’t. Tribal leaders resolve to promote the language and accommodate its speakers in government functions, social services, and community schools, or they don’t.

This is not to say that such decisions are made in a vacuum, or that they are always deliberate and voluntary. Language choices are influenced, consciously and unconsciously, by social changes that disrupt the community in numerous ways. These include the range of dislocations Fishman (1991) has cited, such as:

- *Demographic factors.* In- and out-migration disperses a community – for example, when people have to leave their reservation to attend school or look for jobs. Mobility often leads to intermarriage with other language communities, which in turn means that English will likely become the common language of the household. In addition, we should not overlook the forcible dispersion of certain tribes through genocidal campaigns. These were especially brutal in California, where authorities also refused to establish reservations for most tribes, which might have provided space for language communities to regroup. It is no coincidence that Native American tongues in that state are among the most endangered.
- *Economic forces.* Opportunities for employment and commerce tend to be open only to those who are fully proficient in the dominant language. This is increasingly true when a wage economy starts to replace an agricultural economy and when isolated markets become integrated into a consumer society. A generation ago in the Southwest, trading post operators had to be proficient in languages such

as Navajo to deal with rural Indians. Today it is the Indians who must accommodate to an English-language marketplace.

- *Mass media.* Television and VCRs have had a noticeable impact among Native Americans in recent years. With increased electrification and satellite dishes popping up in remote areas, Indian children are suddenly watching MTV, listening to Heavy Metal rock music, and playing video games, none of which makes use of their native language. Perhaps more important, electronic media have displaced traditional pastimes – such as the winter stories through which elders passed down tribal history and culture – with passive forms of entertainment.
- *Social identifiers.* All humans speak like those they admire or aspire to emulate. Native Americans who desire to succeed in professional careers or who feel an attraction to mainstream culture or non-native religions often come to identify with the language of those pursuits and to ascribe low status to their ancestral languages. Such tendencies are especially strong among the young, who increasingly identify with non-Indian role models who speak only English.

These are the kinds of dislocations that occur when barriers fall between the tribal society and the dominant society – in other words, when indigenous-language communities no longer have the option of living in isolation. This has happened earlier on some reservations than on others, but the process is essentially the same. Dan McLaughlin of Navajo Community College put it very well when he told me: ‘You pave roads, you create access to a wage economy, people’s values change, and you get language shift.’

Hypothesis 3: If Language Choices Reflect Social and Cultural Values, Language Shift Reflects a Change in Those Values

Language loss is affected not merely by attitudes about language *per se* – for example, whether to attempt to revitalize the ancestral tongue. If intentions were all that mattered, saving endangered languages would be a simple matter. What complicates, and often hinders, such efforts are larger systems of belief:

- *Individualism* – putting self-interest ahead of community interest. Ambitious individuals tend to ask: ‘How is honoring the old ways going to help me get ahead? Other people can do what they want, but my family is going to stress English, the language of success in the dominant society.’

- *Pragmatism* – focusing on ‘what works’ rather than defending principles that may seem old-fashioned or outmoded. Pragmatists reason that, as indigenous languages decline in power and number of speakers, they are no longer ‘useful.’ With English taking their place in more and more domains, tribal tongues no longer seem worth maintaining.
- *Materialism* – allowing spiritual, moral, and ethical values to be overshadowed by consumerism. The attitude is that indigenous languages won’t put bread on the table, so why worry about preserving them? Teaching them to children is seen as a waste of time. And, of course, time is money.

The encroachment of these market-driven ideologies, familiar patterns in Western thought,² has a great deal to do with language shift in native communities. At one time such viewpoints were kept out by social, economic, and geographical distances. Although the US government tried repeatedly to implant them – for example, the Dawes Severalty Act of 1887 mandated private land ownership, in an effort to teach Indians ‘selfishness, which is at the bottom of civilization’ (Debo, 1940) – individualism, pragmatism, and materialism generally failed to take root in Native communities. Indigenous values and belief systems were too strong.

No more. Technological advances make it increasingly difficult for tribes to insulate themselves from the wider society and its behavioral byproducts. Traditional cultures have never been more threatened. In visiting several reservations recently, I found many of these dislocations in community habits and values to be much in evidence. Another interesting thing I discovered, however, is that each tribe has its own story, distinct from those of any other. Here are some observations from my visits to four of these reservations.

Navajo

The rapid erosion of the native language among young Navajos has become increasingly obvious in the past two decades. This is true even in two communities that remain relatively remote, Rough Rock and Rock Point, Arizona, which also happen to have highly regarded bilingual education programs. As recently as the mid-1970s, more than 95 percent of children starting in these programs spoke Navajo, and most spoke little or no English. Today, according to teachers and school administrators, only about half of the newly arrived kindergartners are orally fluent in the native language (although at Rough Rock this estimate is disputed).³

In border towns and other large communities, of course, children’s

fluency in Navajo is considerably lower. A reservation-wide study of Navajo Head Start programs reported that teachers judged 54 percent of preschoolers to be monolingual in English, 18 percent monolingual in Navajo, and 28 percent bilingual (Platero, 1992).

For the Navajo language today, there seem to be few stable domains where it can function without being challenged by English. Because many younger people are unable to speak the native language well or at all, there is social pressure to use English much of the time. This is true in tribal government and even at Navajo Community College, where Professor Benjamin Barney reports that English largely predominates, except in the teacher-training program that he directs.

Some of this language shift has conscious roots. Opposition to bilingual education has been fanned by fundamentalist Christian groups who fear its potential to encourage Navajo religion. In addition, some parents have been convinced that learning the native language is a distraction from learning English and other school subjects. But these seem to be minority sentiments. The vast majority of tribal members, if asked, would favor keeping Navajo alive. The problem is that people seldom get around to doing anything about it, for example, by insisting on using the language with younger generations. Why is this so?

First, there seems to be little sense of urgency about language loss because there are still so many Navajo speakers left. The 1990 census counted more than 100,000 on the reservation, although no doubt that figure overestimates the number who are fully proficient (*see pp. 53–54*). At the same time, a growing number of Navajos, generally middle-aged or older, are becoming concerned about language shift among the young. Yet many of these people, including most of the language activists I have met, concede that their own children have grown up without learning Navajo. Now, even if they would like to do so, these young adults cannot seem to find the time in their busy lives. So a disparity often exists between good intentions and practical efforts to maintain the language.

Second, there are significant differences in attitudes between generations. Among Navajo youth, the native language tends to have very low status—lower than on any other reservation I visited. It seems to be associated with rural backwardness, with people who are not making it in today's society. (There is even a slang epithet for such Navajo speakers: *Johns*.) I happened to visit the elementary school at Chinle, Arizona, on the same day as some Navajo Code Talkers. These Marine Corps veterans, who played a crucial role in winning World War II in the Pacific, are a great source of pride to the Navajo Nation. One of the Code Talkers, Carl Gorman, asked students in a 6th grade class how many could speak at least a little Navajo. At first, not a single hand went up. After some

coaxing, about half of the children put up their hands. It was clear, however, that speaking the language was not something they were spontaneously proud of. This attitude would seem to spell trouble for the long-term health of Navajo.

Hualapai

The Hualapai reservation is another place where the native language has been rapidly disappearing among younger generations. By the mid-1990s, only 50 to 60 percent of kindergartners starting school there spoke Hualapai fluently, as compared with 95 percent in the mid-1970s. Many young adults today, the parental generation, are themselves no longer fluent in the language. Nevertheless, it is still heard throughout the community. The majority of families have elderly members who speak Hualapai as their dominant tongue, so children are often exposed to it in the home. But that too is changing, as a new federal housing development has tended to break up extended families.

A special factor that seems to promote the shift to English is the problem of dialect differences in Hualapai. Until about a century ago, the Pai comprised fourteen bands spread over the northwestern quadrant of Arizona, an enormous territory. While they spoke essentially the same language, geographical dispersion produced a distinct dialect for each of the bands, which continued to live separately until about two generations ago. Then, in the 1950s and 1960s, most of the Pai – except for the Havasupai and Yavapai, who have their own reservations – relocated in Peach Springs, on the edge of the Grand Canyon. With a population of about 1500, this is the only residential community on the Hualapai reservation. Not surprisingly, after such a short time, dialect differences remain quite obvious.

While lack of standardization is a problem in many tribes, often provoking spirited disagreements about ‘correct’ usage, it has created special complications among the Hualapai. People are naturally loyal to their native dialect (as we all tend to be) and they often engage in ridicule about each other’s linguistic ‘errors.’ Such joking is usually taken in stride by those who are fully proficient in the mother tongue. But for those who are not, especially teenagers and young adults, it tends to create self-consciousness. Several of the latter told me that they hesitate to speak Hualapai for fear of being criticized. It is safer to speak English, because nobody cares about alleged errors in English. In addition, a small minority in the community objects to the dialect of Hualapai used in the Peach Springs school, notwithstanding the bilingual program’s international acclaim. So they send their children elsewhere to be educated.

A final factor favoring language shift among Hualapai is that the local

school goes only to the 8th grade. Students have to travel off the reservation – usually to Kingman, sixty miles away – to attend a high school that has no bilingual classes. Naturally they tend to speak much less Hualapai there. More important, their social environment changes. Students not only make friends with non-Hualapai but often marry outside the tribe.

Pasqua Yaqui

Concentrated in southern Arizona, the Yaqui are relatively recent arrivals to the United States. Their traditional homeland is in the Mexican state of Sonora, where they long lived apart from Spanish-speakers, even after the Jesuits converted them to Catholicism. Then, in the late 1800s, the dictator Porfirio Díaz tried to exterminate them with military campaigns. Though he failed in this objective, warfare did succeed in dispersing the tribe and reducing its territory.

Over the next thirty years, many Yaqui crossed the border to become refugees in and around several urban centers in Arizona. The US government, however, regarded them as illegal immigrants. Their status was not truly settled until the 1970s, when they were granted tribal recognition and a reservation near Tucson. While the Border Patrol was aware of the Yaquis' existence, it generally paid them little attention. Blending into Chicano barrios, they were also difficult to detect, since they looked Mexican and usually spoke more Spanish than English. At times, however, tribal members – including some who had been born in the United States – were caught up in mass deportations, which continued periodically until the 1950s.

So speaking the native language, *Yoeme*, in public could be quite risky. Children were counseled by their parents not to do so for fear the family would be turned in and shipped back to Mexico. While this helped to ensure the survival of the tribe, it worked against survival of the language.

In recent years the Yaqui have begun assimilating into Anglo-American culture (as have many of the Latinos in Tucson and Phoenix). Over the last two or three generations, there has been a massive language shift. According to a census by Felipe Molina, a Yaqui writer and lexicographer, by the early 1990s only about 6 percent of the 8500 tribal members remained fluent in the native language. Virtually none of these were children. In Marana, Arizona, a relatively isolated community I visited in 1994, the youngest *Yoeme* speaker was eighteen years old.

There is still some cause for optimism, however. *Yoeme* remains quite viable in Sonora, where children are still learning the language in isolated Yaqui villages. One of the Tucson schools has organized cultural exchange programs for Pasqua Yaqui and their relatives in

Mexico. There are also hopes for joint economic development projects between the two groups, thanks to the North American Free Trade Agreement, something that could make Yoeme a valuable economic as well as cultural resource.

Mississippi Band of Choctaw

This relatively small branch of the Choctaw, with about 5500 tribal members (versus nearly 43,000 in southeastern Oklahoma), is far from isolated in a geographic sense. Yet it has a high rate of retention of the native language: about 90 percent among children entering school. Meanwhile, fluency in English is also widespread. The Mississippi Choctaw represent a rare example of *diglossia*, in which a single speech community uses two languages for distinct purposes.

At the Choctaws' Pearl River reservation, the tribal government, tribal business enterprises, and the tribally controlled school system operate mainly if not exclusively in English. Although there was a federally funded bilingual program in the 1970s, it proved unpopular with the community and was soon terminated. For its part, the Choctaw language is used extensively in social, ceremonial, and family life. This is the only reservation I visited where I encountered groups of teenagers speaking their tribal tongue spontaneously, without teachers or other adults cajoling them to do so.

How did this situation develop? Informed observers believe that the key factor has been social isolation. Pearl River is located near Philadelphia, Mississippi, a town that became world-renowned for its racism when three civil-rights workers were murdered there in 1964. The Choctaw were the first of the eastern tribes to experience forced removal from their homeland in the 1830s. Those who evaded the move and stayed behind in Mississippi enjoyed few if any rights. Kept out of public schools and discriminated against in many other ways, they developed a strong ethic of self-reliance and self-isolation. Assimilation was never an option for them until quite recently; nor is it a popular aspiration today. The Choctaw needed to learn English to deal with non-Indians, of course, but they have developed their own parallel institutions. Hence their tendency to retain the Choctaw language.

All this may be changing, however. Since the late 1970s, the tribe has pulled off a kind of economic miracle, starting its own factories and commercial businesses and, most recently, a casino. The Mississippi Band of Choctaw is now the third largest private employer in the state, bringing numerous English speakers to the reservation for jobs in construction and other tribal enterprises. So the tribe is now forced to interact more with outsiders. Elders are already beginning to see

changes in the use of Choctaw and to initiate conscious efforts to preserve the language.

To return to my working hypotheses: What kinds of effective strategies can we identify for language revitalization?

Hypothesis 4: If Language Shift Reflects a Change in Values, So Too Must Efforts to Reverse Language Shift (RLS)

According to Fishman (1991), 'successful RLS is invariably part of a larger ethnocultural goal.' As examples one might cite the movement for national autonomy in Catalonia or the class struggles of Mayan peasants in Chiapas. In these cases, language revitalization is not an isolated objective, but a part of broader agendas for change.

What kinds of ethnocultural goals would advance the cause of endangered Native American languages? It is one thing to come up with creative ideas about language revitalization, as brainstorming sessions have done at recent conferences.⁴ It is quite another to organize people to adopt and practice such ideas consistently. The latter will require strategy and tactics for remolding attitudes, which in turn will necessitate a better analysis of why people make the choices they now do. Moreover, such steps will need to be tailored to the peculiarities of each community. While specific language attitudes may be easy to change – or perhaps community members already agree in principle about the importance of revitalizing the heritage language – the more difficult task involves a broader realignment of values to combat forces such as individualism, pragmatism, and materialism.

How do fundamental changes in values occur? With difficulty; casual commitments are usually insufficient. Either individuals' lives change in radical ways, or they experience a spiritual conversion, or they are influenced by a social movement that speaks directly to long-suppressed needs and aspirations. In the case of language revitalization, I believe a social movement will be necessary, one that addresses questions that matter to Native Americans. This will most likely occur in the context of struggles for self-determination: cultural, economic, and perhaps political as well.

Hypothesis 5: Language Shift Cannot be Reversed by Outsiders, However Well-meaning

As Michael Krauss (US Senate, 1992: 21) has written, 'We know ... from our work at the Alaska Native Language Center that you cannot from the outside inculcate into people the will to revive or maintain their languages. This has to come from them, from themselves.' If language

revitalization efforts are to succeed, they must be led by indigenous institutions, organizations, and activists.

Schools, by contrast, are often regarded as alien institutions in Indian communities (Henze and Vanett, 1993), unless education is under effective local control. Experience has shown that establishing such control is easier said than done, whether or not tribes contract to run their own schools. The frequent need to hire outside expertise can mean sacrificing power over things that are important to community members. Generally speaking, non-Indian administrators bring with them their own agendas – which may be worthwhile, but they are not indigenous to the tribe. The only way to avoid this trap is to train Native talent to perform these jobs.

Even where there is effective local control, schools can only do so much. Again, it is hard to translate intentions into action, not unlike the situation in many homes. Teachers and administrators in a bilingual program may agree that the native language is endangered and must be saved; yet without conscious planning and vigilance, English may still predominate. When I visited Rough Rock, I heard lots of concern about this problem among teachers, who wanted to create ‘a totally Navajo environment’ at least part of the time. Otherwise, they felt an overpowering tendency to lapse into English.

Another obvious problem is dependence on federal funding, a near-universal phenomenon in Indian education and a force for program instability. Title VII bilingual education grants, for example, were designed not as a permanent entitlement, but as seed money to get programs started, promote experimentation, and build local capacity to make them self-supporting. On reservations, however, alternative resources are usually lacking. So when the grant ends after three to five years, so does the program in many cases.

Another pitfall is that US bilingual education programs developed largely as a transitional approach for assimilating immigrant children. The majority of program models make no attempt to preserve the native language after the student learns English. Until recently, the best Indian bilingual programs had to bend the law to combine native-language maintenance with teaching English.

Even where schools have made a concerted effort to maintain and develop bilingual skills, such as at Peach Springs and Rock Point, language shift has been proceeding rapidly. One reason is that these programs were not originally designed to prevent language loss, which was not perceived as a problem twenty years ago on the Hualapai and Navajo reservations. Another reason is that tribal members outside the schools have yet to become mobilized to keep their languages alive. According to Lucille Watahomigie, director of

the Peach Springs program, parents often assume that 'the schools can solve that problem' rather than seeing the need for a 'partnership' between school and community.

There are two other educational approaches, recently initiated by Navajo school districts in Arizona, that promise to address the problem more directly: *two-way bilingual education*, as practiced at Tuba City, and *early immersion*, a model developed by Wayne Holm at Fort Defiance. These types of program, designed to conserve Native American languages, are now eligible for funding under the 1994 amendments to the Bilingual Education Act.

It is still premature to gauge how effective such approaches will prove in practice. While they have yielded excellent results with children whose languages are not severely threatened, it is unclear how they will work in a context of rapid language shift. Meanwhile, resources remain limited. Since Republicans regained control of Congress in 1994, the federal government has reduced support for such efforts, while cutting budgets generally for bilingual education and programs serving Indian students. English-only legislation, which was nearly enacted in 1996 (*see pp. 31–51*), would have jeopardized language revitalization work funded by the Administration for Native Americans, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the National Park Service, the National Science Foundation, and the Department of Education.

Fortunately, at the current stage, large-scale federal funding is hardly crucial to language revitalization efforts. Small amounts can be quite helpful, of course. Witness the catalytic effect of the Native American Languages Act, whose paltry \$1–2 million in grants each year has generated a great deal of enthusiasm for tribal projects. Still, it seems feasible to raise sums of this magnitude from non-governmental sources, such as private foundations, corporate donors, and of course, tribes themselves, now that casinos, tourism, and similar enterprises are beginning to thrive. Lavish grants might even lead language revitalization down blind alleys (although this claim is unlikely to be tested in the foreseeable future). Fortunately, at this time the most promising approaches are extremely low-tech. This brings me to a key idea of Joshua Fishman's that bears repeating.

Hypothesis 6: Successful Strategies for Reversing Language Shift Demand an Understanding of the Stage We Are Currently In

What is appropriate in one community, with a certain degree of language loss and a certain level of consciousness about the problem, is unlikely to be appropriate in another community where conditions differ.

Timely solutions are crucial, whereas untimely ones are worse than useless; they can be counterproductive. At present, I would argue that investing heavily in CD-ROM technology and language-learning software would be a foolish diversion of resources; that organizing mass demonstrations to demand additional support from government would be a waste of time and energy; and that convening a summit meeting of tribes to write a manifesto on the subject would likely lead nowhere. While each of these tactics might be useful at a different stage, in my view none would be useful today, when we lack definitive answers to the question: *What is to be done?*

In short, there is a need to put first things first. While there are many creative ideas being applied and refined, no one has yet developed a comprehensive strategy for revitalizing Native American languages. The promising models, techniques, and tactics that do exist are inadequately disseminated. So, for the most part, they remain unknown to the majority of Indian educators and community activists. What, then, is necessary to move things forward?

Hypothesis 7: At This Stage in the United States, the Key Task is to Develop Indigenous Leadership

Most of the hypotheses discussed so far concern *objective factors*, or forces affecting language loyalty and language shift that are outside anyone's conscious control. These need to be studied and understood before any effort at social change can succeed. At the same time, though, we need to pay attention to *subjective factors* – to tasks that are within our control – in building a movement to revitalize endangered languages. This will mean centralizing available information about what is already being done, organizing discussions about strategic directions for our work, and, most important, fostering leadership from Native communities themselves.

Outsiders cannot lead this movement, although they can serve as valuable allies. No doubt linguists and educators can be instrumental, both in providing technical assistance to language revitalization efforts and in serving as ambassadors to the US government and the American public about the importance of such work. But with a few exceptions, such as Native American linguists and educators, academic experts are not situated to play direct leadership roles. Outside allies – and I count myself in this group – can contribute most by providing resources, training, and encouragement to indigenous language activists.

It is heartening to see the growing enthusiasm for language revitalization among Native peoples. I have encountered it on reservations, in

schools, and at some excellent and well-attended conferences in recent years. Projects are popping up all over the country. Yet so far there is no central forum for discussion or organization for moving things forward.

Without such a vehicle, today's momentum could be lost. Now is not the time for summit meetings or mass organizing or expensive technology projects. Now is the time to develop our brain trust; to facilitate communication among activists through publications and the Internet, as well as conferences; to compile resource guides and how-to-manuals that share practical experiences, featuring failures as well as successes; to train Indian linguists and educators; to build alliances with sympathetic outsiders; and of course, to encourage talented and committed people to get involved.

A high proportion of today's Indian-language activists are tied to educational institutions of one kind or other. Educators have served as a kind of early warning system about language loss. It goes without saying that they are both well situated and well qualified to help address this crisis. Obviously there are important contributions to be made in the schools. *But not only in the schools.* Broader efforts are essential in restoring and expanding safe havens for Native languages throughout the cultural, economic, and political life of the community. For language revitalization to succeed, these domains must provide their share of the energy, the commitment, and – most important right now – the leadership.

Notes

1. Paradoxically, this is true even for fast-growing languages such as Spanish. Seven out of ten children of Hispanic immigrants become dominant or monolingual in English (Veltman, 1988). This trend, though masked by the continued arrival of Spanish-speaking immigrants, is quite noticeable in areas where relatively few newcomers are settling. In northern New Mexico, for example, Spanish is fighting for survival, notwithstanding its viability there for nearly four centuries. For Native Americans, the problem is even more acute. Since their languages are indigenous to this continent, there are no reinforcements coming in from elsewhere. For Native peoples, language loss is forever. This phenomenon – while harmful to any community – is especially devastating to indigenous cultures, which rely heavily on oral traditions.
2. This is not to endorse the view, fashionable in some quarters today, that all Western ways are by definition oppressive and reprehensible. American democratic ideals, such as respect for human rights and minority self-determination – though not consistently observed in practice – nevertheless provide openings to rally the public's support for language revitalization.
3. It should be noted that these assessments are based on teachers' observations rather than on any objective test. Some administrators believe that the percentage of Navajo speakers is considerably larger at the Rough Rock Community School.
4. These include a series of Symposiums on Stabilizing Indigenous Languages,

which began at Northern Arizona University in 1994; annual meetings of the Native American Language Issues (NALI) Institute; and the American Indian Language Development Institute, a summer training program at the University of Arizona.

The Political Paradox of Bilingual Education

Enacted at the apex of the Great Society, the Bilingual Education Act of 1968 passed Congress without a single voice raised in dissent. Americans have spent the past thirty years debating what the law was meant to accomplish. Was it intended primarily to assimilate limited-English-proficient (LEP) children more efficiently? To teach them English as rapidly as possible? To encourage bilingualism and biliteracy? To remedy academic underachievement and high dropout rates? To raise the self-esteem of minority students? To promote social equality? Or to pursue all of these goals simultaneously? The bill's legislative history provides no definitive answer.

It is hardly an idle question. Whether to continue teaching LEP students in two languages is now a matter of public debate throughout the United States. Since the mid-1980s, critics have won increasing support for the contention that this experiment, while well-intentioned, has failed to meet expectations. Now policy-makers are seriously considering demands to limit or even dismantle the program. California voters have already chosen the latter course. Proposition 227, a ballot initiative approved in June 1998, eliminates most native-language instruction in a state with 40 percent of the nation's LEP students. The future of bilingual education is suddenly in doubt.

Ironically, research provides considerably more support for bilingual approaches today than it did in 1968, when few program models existed and almost none had been evaluated. What seemed reasonable in theory – that investing in children's native-language development should ultimately pay cognitive and academic dividends – has now been borne out in practice. Not that success has been universal for all approaches labeled bilingual. Nor has research proved 'conclusively,' beyond a reasonable doubt, their superiority over English-only methodologies for all children in all contexts. By a more reasonable standard, however, *a preponderance of the evidence* favors the conclusion that well-designed bilingual programs can produce high levels of school achievement over the long term, at no cost to English acquisition, among students from disempowered groups (see, e.g. Ramírez *et al.*, 1991; August and Hakuta, 1997; Greene, 1998).

Pedagogically speaking, these research findings are excellent news. They confirm that developing fluent bilingualism and cultivating academic excellence are complementary, rather than contradictory, goals. It is not necessary to sacrifice LEP students' native-language skills to teach them effectively in English. Moreover, the findings suggest that, while language is not the only barrier to school success for these children, approaches that stress native-language instruction can be helpful in overcoming other obstacles such as poverty, family illiteracy, and social stigmas associated with minority status. These challenges are formidable, to be sure, requiring schools to replicate effective program models, adapt them to local conditions, train and retrain teachers, develop curriculum and materials, encourage parent participation, and pay attention to a host of other practical details. Yet they are hardly insuperable, provided there is a commitment to improve programs for English learners.

Politically speaking, however, the research findings are less encouraging. They support an educational rationale for bilingual instruction that is both complex and counter-intuitive to members of the public. They also imply a sociopolitical goal that few Americans are inclined to endorse: the legitimization of bilingualism in public contexts. Since the mid-1980s, many US voters have reacted defensively against the racial, cultural, and language diversity brought by rising levels of immigration. This has led to a nationwide campaign for 'the legal protection of English,' resulting in numerous laws restricting the use of other languages (*see pp. 4–30, 31–51*).

Immigrant children's progress in acquiring English is now regarded as a matter of urgency, not only by Anglo-Americans but also by a significant number of immigrant parents. Hence the growing popularity of nostrums like 'structured immersion,' whose enthusiasts promise short-cuts to English proficiency. Conversely, bilingual approaches that feature a more gradual transition to the mainstream are vulnerable to legislative restrictions. In addition to Proposition 227, bills have been proposed in several states and localities, as well as in Congress, to impose arbitrary time limits on a child's enrollment in bilingual education (or, in some cases, *any* special program to address limited English proficiency).

To understand how we arrived at this juncture, it is necessary to analyze the historical roots of today's language attitudes. Ethnic diversity is hardly a recent phenomenon in this country. Nor is bilingual education. How have Americans thought about and coped with these issues previously? How have current policies on language-minority education evolved? And how are future ones likely to be determined?

Deconstructing Title VII

Let us begin by considering our original question. Was the Bilingual Education Act (also known as Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act) intended as:

- *an anti-poverty initiative* to overcome the educational disadvantages of language-minority students – that is, to remedy the problem of limited English proficiency?
- *an anti-discrimination measure* to open up the curriculum for LEP students – to guarantee their right to equal educational opportunity?
- *an experiment in multicultural education* to foster bilingualism – to develop linguistic and cultural resources other than those of the dominant society?

These alternatives correspond to Ruíz's (1984) 'orientations in language planning,' or ways of framing language issues and the language policies adopted in response.

Language-as-problem focuses on social liabilities, such as limited proficiency in the majority tongue and its academic consequences. From this perspective, Title VII was a way to ease LEP children's transition to the mainstream by teaching English, raising self-esteem, and thereby enabling these students to progress in school.

Language-as-right emphasizes questions of social equality, or lack thereof, such as whether members of minority groups enjoy unimpeded access to public institutions. In this view, Title VII was designed to overcome language barriers, make school meaningful for LEP students, and give them a chance to succeed.

Language-as-resource takes a human-capital approach, stressing the social value of conserving and developing minority language skills. Seen through this prism, Title VII was intended to promote fluency in two languages, exploit cultural diversity to meet national needs, and encourage ethnic tolerance.

Ruíz's orientations can help to illuminate the assumptions and implications of alternative language policies. For example, *language-as-problem*, by focusing on students' *language disability*, is consistent with a quick-exit pedagogy (bilingual or otherwise) that places the rapid acquisition of English ahead of other academic goals. By contrast, *language-as-resource*, by focusing on students' *language ability* in a minority tongue, tends to support a late-exit enrichment model that continues native-language instruction after students are proficient in English.

As *ex post facto* descriptions, however, Ruíz's categories are less useful in explaining causality – that is, in analyzing the political and ideological factors that go into language policy decisions. Orientations in language planning, elaborated in 'pure' form and focusing on sociolinguistic issues, may accurately summarize the policy alternatives as understood by experts in the field. Yet rarely do they correspond to the interests of contending factions or to the actual terms of political debate, which are never pure; usually they extend well beyond the realm of language. In short, *orientations toward language per se are rarely determinant in policy decisions about language*. This becomes evident in tracing the legislative history of Title VII.

Political momentum was strong from the outset, as thirty-seven different bilingual education bills were introduced in the 90th Congress. Throughout 1967, a series of House and Senate hearings showcased the educational problems of LEP children and elicited virtually unanimous support for a solution involving bilingual instruction. Disagreements were confined to secondary issues, such as whether to cover all LEP students or (as originally proposed) only Spanish-speakers. The witness lists included academic researchers, language educators, school administrators, teachers, psychologists, social workers, elected officials, and representatives of Hispanic, Asian American, and American Indian organizations.¹ Some experts recommended bilingual education as a remedy for LEP students' 'linguistic handicap' and resulting 'educational problems.' Others focused on the bill's potential to develop needed language resources, Spanish skills in particular. Many witnesses cited both objectives, describing them as educationally compatible. (Although the theme of language-as-right was barely detectable in deliberations over Title VII, that would soon change with a spate of litigation brought by language-minority parents.) José Cárdenas, a veteran educator from San Antonio, recalls that neither he nor his fellow experts worried about a contradiction between the *transition* and *maintenance* goals of bilingual instruction (Crawford, 1992a). These terms – yet to be coined in 1967 – were a product of political, not pedagogical, necessity.

The most substantive, albeit brief, debate on the goals of the bill came on the Senate floor (*Congressional Record*, 1967). Joseph Montoya of New Mexico urged his colleagues:

We must take advantage of the language pluralism that exists in the Southwest. But it must be constructive pluralism. Comprehensive bilingual education programs are, to my way of thinking, one way we can give to all [Spanish-speaking students] the best of both worlds in terms of language, culture, and cooperation in daily life. (p. 35053)

Frank Lausche of Ohio was less enthusiastic about 'the Federal Government pouring in ... money' to help maintain minority tongues. A native speaker of Slovenian, he recalled that 'I went to a grammar school where they taught English. They did not teach me Slovenian in order to learn English [*sic*].' He also worried about the precedent: 'What are we to do if there is a Hungarian neighborhood in Toledo that finds it wants Hungarian taught in its schools?' (p. 34702).

The bill's chief sponsor, Ralph Yarborough of Texas, sought to finesse the differences by emphasizing transition while leaving the door ajar for maintenance:

It is not the purpose of this bill to create pockets of different languages throughout the country. It is the main purpose of the bill to bring millions of school children into the mainstream of American life and make them literate in the national language of the country in which they live: namely, English. Not to stamp out the mother tongue and not to make their mother tongue the dominant language, but just to try to make these children fully literate in English, so that the children can move into the mainstream of American life. (p. 34703)

This explanation appeared to satisfy Senator Lausche, who asked 'whether all of us should not be expert in at least 2 languages – perhaps 3' and recommended 'a knowledge of Latin' to everyone (p. 34703). No further questions were raised, and the Bilingual Education Act passed as part of an omnibus education measure.²

Ambiguity served Senator Yarborough's purposes. In 1967, the political universe was perfectly aligned to create an anti-poverty program serving Hispanic Americans, whose particular needs had thus far received limited attention from the Great Society. Mexican American educators and the National Education Association (1966) had recently highlighted the plight of Spanish-speaking students, 'the invisible minority,' at a conference in Tucson. There they enlisted Yarborough, a populist Democrat, in what came to be known as the *bilingual movement*. But this was by no means a partisan cause. Senator George Murphy, a conservative California Republican, also endorsed the idea, noting that then-Governor Ronald Reagan had recently signed legislation repealing his state's mandate for English-only instruction.

Still there was no time to lose. Urban riots and a costly war in Southeast Asia were beginning to spoil the Johnson Administration's appetite for social spending. Indeed, Yarborough had to twist arms to get its support for a new 'title' of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. (The Administration initially favored funding bilingual approaches through existing programs.) Who knew when this opportunity would come

again? Why risk it by raising sensitive matters like assimilation and pluralism? Better to pass a bilingual education bill today and clarify its goals at some future date.

As political strategy, Senator Yarborough's approach is hard to fault. As policy-making, it left many loose ends. In particular, the unresolved question of goals would haunt Title VII for years to come. Reflecting on the legislative process long after the fact, many of the key players (including Yarborough) agreed that the law was conceived as an experiment not in language policy but in education policy, designed to tackle a problem of underachievement in which language happened to play a role (Croghan, 1997). Conscious or not, the federal government's intervention on behalf of bilingual instruction was unprecedented and far-reaching. What did it mean? The program's administrators, members of Congress, school personnel, academic researchers, and the parents of LEP children all cherished their own interpretations.

The Office of Education included the following advice in its 1971 instructions for Title VII grant applicants: 'It must be remembered that the ultimate goal of bilingual education is a student who functions well in two languages on any occasion.' This was hardly the consensus view on Capitol Hill. Congressional committee members made it clear that 'we were in there to overcome [students'] "bilingual problem,"' according to Albar Peña, the program's first director. 'There was an obsession that if they were not English-speaking at the end of the first grade that the world would come to an end' (Crawford, 1992a: 85). Appropriations for Title VII nevertheless remained modest – only \$7.5 million in 1969. Although funding increased to \$45 million by 1974, it was enough to support a mere 211 local programs.

As state legislatures began repealing English-only school laws and authorizing native-language instruction, they showed a similar ambivalence. In 1971, Massachusetts became the first state to require 'transitional bilingual education' under certain circumstances – and the first to use the term – but its definition of the program omitted any mention of goals (*Mass. Gen. Laws* XII, Chap. 71A). A similar law, adopted two years later in Illinois, articulated the purpose of transitional programs: 'to meet the needs of [LEP] children and facilitate their integration into the regular public school curriculum' (*Ill. Ann. Stat.* Chap. 122, Art. 14C). By the mid-1970s, more than a dozen states had enacted bilingual education statutes; none drew sharp lines of demarcation between transition and maintenance.

Educators, for their part, continued to see the two goals as compatible. According to a nationwide study of Title VII's impact by the American Institutes of Research (Danoff *et al.*, 1977–78), 86 percent of local bilingual

programs retained Spanish-speaking children even after they were deemed fluent in English. On the other hand, 50 percent of 'bilingual' teachers lacked proficiency in the native languages of their students – casting doubts on whether Title VII was doing much to promote fluent bilingualism. Amid the furor over the first finding, however, the second was largely ignored. Critics charged the Office of Education with flouting both the melting-pot tradition and the intent of Congress by failing to 'mainstream' children as quickly as possible (Epstein, 1977). The language-as-resource approach was condemned as diametrically opposed to the goal of assimilation. In addition, AIR's mediocre report card for Title VII – 'no consistent significant impact' on achievement – led opponents to question the program's effectiveness. This marked the first serious opposition to the bilingual experiment. Under the leadership of Senator S.I. Hayakawa of California, it would soon expand into an English-only movement seeking to restrict most uses of minority tongues by government.

In reaction to the controversy, Congress voted in 1978 to restrict federal support to *transitional bilingual education* (TBE) programs. Henceforth the native language could be used only 'to the extent necessary to allow a child to achieve competence in the English language' (P.L. 95-561). While this statutory restriction was eased in 1984, for another decade only a tiny portion of federal funds flowed to maintenance, now known as *developmental bilingual education* (DBE). Nevertheless, critics successfully portrayed Title VII as a program that emphasized the native language and 'ethnic pride' at the expense of English. Led by the Reagan Administration's secretary of education, William J. Bennett, they advocated 'local flexibility' for districts to try English-only alternatives such as *structured immersion* (Bennett, [1985] 1992). In response, defenders insisted that bilingual education was the most efficient solution to the problems of limited English proficiency and academic underachievement.

Thus, during the 1987–88 reauthorization of Title VII, the debate involved means, not ends. Both sides embraced the language-as-problem orientation, which proved to be consistent with diametrically opposed policies for educating LEP students. Congress struck a compromise, diverting up to 25 percent of annual appropriations from bilingual to *special alternative instructional programs* (SAIPs). Far less funding was allocated to developmental programs, despite their promising academic outcomes and success in cultivating bilingualism.

Language-as-resource, while gaining hegemony among educational researchers and practitioners, was marginalized politically by the new terms of the debate. With any form of native-language instruction now condemned as a distraction from English – in effect, Title VII's critics

portrayed TBE as a language-maintenance approach – the program's defenders tended to downplay its potential to develop bilingual skills. One exception was the Miami-based Spanish American League against Discrimination (SALAD). Troubled by Bennett's assimilationist rhetoric, in 1985 the group countered with the slogan '*English Plus.*' While English is essential in the United States, SALAD argued, to succeed in a global economy children need to learn more than one language, and DBE could be an effective means to that end. This philosophy was soon put into service as a programmatic alternative to the broader English-only campaign (Combs, 1992). Over the years, however, English Plus has appealed primarily to language educators and ethnic minorities. It has found few legislative champions outside of the Latino and Asian American caucuses (e.g. Serrano, 1997).³

'Simple Justice'

By the late 1960s, bilingual education had also become a civil-rights issue. For militant Chicanos in particular, it emerged as a key demand, in no small part because of the suppression of Spanish in schools throughout the Southwest, a symbol of racial oppression. For La Raza Unida Party, which won control of the Crystal City, Texas, school board in 1970, bilingual education became a matter of self-determination, an assertion of ethnic pride, and a pedagogical approach to which high hopes were attached (Shockley, 1974). Wherever language minorities were concentrated, school officials began to feel community pressure to adopt bilingual methods. Several districts became the target of lawsuits by parents, who argued that failure to address students' language needs meant failure to provide them an equal opportunity to learn. As Mexican American students staged boycotts to protest their treatment by the schools in cities like Los Angeles, bilingual education was frequently among their demands.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 USC §2000d *et seq.*) guaranteed that 'no person can be excluded from participation in, or be denied the benefits of' a federally supported program or activity on the basis of race, color, or national origin. As President Kennedy said in proposing the legislation, 'Simple justice requires that public funds, to which all taxpayers of all races contribute, not be spent in any fashion which encourages, entrenches, subsidizes, or results in racial discrimination' (*Congressional Record*, 1963: 11161). Applying this principle to public schools that had intentionally segregated students by race seemed straightforward enough. But what were its implications when treating all students alike

meant failing to serve their diverse needs? Did LEP students have a right to be treated differently and, if so, in what ways?

Guidance was slow in coming from federal authorities. Finally, the US Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (1970) issued a memorandum on school districts' obligations toward LEP students. It warned that, under the civil-rights law passed six years earlier, the sink-or-swim treatment was no longer permissible. Public schools would now be required to take 'affirmative steps' to help students overcome language barriers. Moreover, they would have to provide such assistance without segregating children on dead-end tracks of remedial education.

Few districts paid much attention. In San Francisco, for example, administrators continued to insist that by giving LEP students the *identical* education offered to all students – instruction via the English language – schools were discharging their obligation to provide an *equal* education for all. If some children failed to understand the language, that was their problem. Federal district and appeals courts agreed, rejecting a lawsuit brought on behalf of Chinese-speaking students. While this perspective may seem myopic today, in the early 1970s it was widely shared. The issue of desegregation had so dominated the movement for civil rights that any suggestion of 'separate but equal' education was suspect, even to many progressives. Unlike African-Americans fighting exclusion, the language-minority plaintiffs in the San Francisco case sought to establish the principle that children with different needs are entitled to different treatment by the schools. They cited the words of Justice Frankfurter a generation earlier: 'There is no greater inequality than the equal treatment of unequals' (Steinman, 1971).

The US Supreme Court embraced the parents' reasoning in a unanimous opinion. Its ruling in *Lau v. Nichols* (1974), while limited in scope, remains the major legal precedent on language rights in the United States – or, more precisely, on the obligation of government to provide appropriate language accommodations to safeguard (other) fundamental rights. Writing for the court, Justice Douglas reasoned that:

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. Basic English skills are at the very core of what these public schools teach. Imposition of a requirement that, before a child can effectively participate in the educational program, he must already have acquired those basic skills is to make a mockery of public education. We know that those who do not understand

English are certain to find their classroom experiences wholly incomprehensible and in no way meaningful. (p. 565)

The decision stopped short of mandating bilingual education, leaving the door open to other pedagogical treatments for students' 'language deficiency':

No specific remedy is urged upon us. Teaching English to the students of Chinese ancestry who do not speak the language is one choice. Giving instructions to this group in Chinese is another. There may be others. Petitioner asks only that the Board of Education be directed to apply its expertise to the problem and rectify the situation. (p. 563)

As interpreted by the US Office of Education, however, *Lau v. Nichols* soon became a *mandate* for bilingual education: the remedy of choice whenever a school district was found to be violating the civil rights of LEP students. Aggressive enforcement of the so-called Lau Remedies from 1975 to 1981 imposed bilingual education on nearly 500 school districts, mostly in the Southwest, through consent agreements known as Lau Plans. This period of federal oversight – or federal 'heavy-handedness,' in the view of many local officials – had contradictory results.

For the first time, large numbers of school districts were induced to pay attention to the language needs of LEP students and to serve them through bilingual education. Before the mid-1970s, few had done either of these things – which required a thorough transformation of business-as-usual – without the carrot of federal or state subsidies. Now came the stick, as the federal Office for Civil Rights (OCR) patrolled school systems with significant language-minority enrollments. Districts that were required to adopt Lau Plans, along with others who acted to preempt federal intervention, tended to accept the new pedagogy grudgingly at first. Over time, however, most came to regard bilingual instruction as, if not a panacea, at least a substantial improvement over sink-or-swim. As pedagogical outcomes improved, community support often increased. But that effect on public opinion was hardly universal.

Anti-Bilingual Backlash

Prescriptiveness also bred resistance. Bilingual education suddenly became a point of conflict between federal authorities and local school boards, as well as a cause célèbre for opponents of Big Government – in short, a natural issue for conservatives of the period. First, the Lau Remedies were attacked as illegitimate because, as quasi-formal 'guidelines,' they had been issued without an opportunity for public scrutiny or

comment. A federal court agreed. Labeling the rule-making process illegal, it ordered the Carter Administration to develop formal Lau Regulations. When the new rules finally appeared, shortly before the 1980 election, they were greeted with near-unanimous opposition from education groups (the only exceptions being the National Education Association and the National Association for Bilingual Education). Ronald Reagan, who had made attacks on federal red tape a major campaign theme, withdrew the Lau Regulations as one of his first presidential acts. Since 1981, OCR has declined to articulate a preference for any pedagogical approach.⁴

Second, the Lau Remedies placed a new burden of proof on the federal government. Mandating bilingual instruction, rather than merely encouraging local school districts to try it, created pressure to offer 'conclusive' evidence of its pedagogical benefits. A US Department of Education review of the research literature, initiated by the Carter Administration, found mixed results at best. Baker and de Kanter (1983: 50–51) concluded that 'no consistent evidence supports the effectiveness of TBE. ... An occasional, inexplicable success is not enough reason to make TBE the law of the land.' The report also speculated that alternative, all-English approaches might be promising. Yet the Baker–de Kanter study itself came under criticism for its methodology (e.g. Willig, 1985). Many of the studies under review involved programs that were poorly designed and implemented, quick-exit models rather than the developmental approaches later found to be superior (Ramírez *et al.*, 1991). The authors' claims for the promise of structured immersion were based on studies of Canadian programs (bilingual ones, at that), which had been tailored to the needs of students who had little in common with language-minority students in the United States. Despite the study's limited credibility among researchers, however, it received considerable play in the news media. The debate lent credence to the argument that if the experts were divided, the scientific evidence remained too 'inconclusive' to support a federal preference for pedagogies using the native language (Bennett, [1985] 1992).

Hence the political paradox of bilingual education. It might well have remained a marginal experiment had it not been imposed on school districts via the Lau Remedies and assorted court orders. Today's most successful instructional models for LEP students might never have been developed otherwise; at best, they would be confined to a tiny number of schools. At the same time, however, federal and state mandates for bilingual education provoked a backlash and a fierce debate over the program's effectiveness. Critics charged that Title VII had failed to fulfill its promises, citing the persistence of high failure and dropout rates

among Latino students in particular. Thus its value as a civil-rights remedy has come into question.

Increasingly, English-only advocates have appropriated the language-as-right approach for their own purposes. Chávez (1991) argues that, if bilingual education segregates LEP children from the mainstream and discourages them from learning English, then it must limit their educational opportunities. Proposition 227, the so-called English for the Children initiative (English Language in Public Schools, 1998), made a similar pitch to California voters:

(a) WHEREAS the English language is the national public language of the United States of America and of the state of California, is spoken by the vast majority of California residents, and is also the leading world language for science, technology, and business, thereby being the language of economic opportunity; and

(b) WHEREAS immigrant parents are eager to have their children acquire a good knowledge of English, thereby allowing them to fully participate in the American Dream of economic and social advancement; and

(c) WHEREAS the government and the public schools of California have a moral obligation and a constitutional duty to provide all of California's children, regardless of their ethnicity or national origins, with the skills necessary to become productive members of our society, and of these skills, literacy in the English language is among the most important; and

(d) WHEREAS the public schools of California currently do a poor job of educating immigrant children, wasting financial resources on costly experimental language programs whose failure over the past two decades is demonstrated by the current high drop-out and low English literacy levels of many immigrant children; and

(e) WHEREAS young immigrant children can easily acquire full fluency in a new language, such as English, if they are heavily exposed to that language in the classroom at early age.

(f) THEREFORE it is resolved that: all children in California public schools shall be taught English as rapidly and effectively as possible. (§300)

Most fair-minded Americans would agree with most of these premises (although paragraphs (d) and (e) would receive few endorsements from experts in second-language acquisition). LEP children are surely entitled to 'be taught English ... as effectively as possible.' Whether that also means 'as rapidly as possible' is another matter. Still, no one disputes that

English proficiency is crucial both to their academic success and to their 'economic and social advancement.'

The question becomes one of means: How should these goals be pursued? Proposition 227 requires that 'all children in California public schools shall be taught English by being taught *in* English.' The initiative statute prohibits most uses of native-language instruction for LEP students and prescribes programs of 'sheltered English immersion during a temporary transition period *not normally intended to exceed one year*' (§305; emphasis added).⁵

Will this sweeping mandate serve the interests and safeguard the rights of English learners? Or will it do precisely the opposite (*see pp. 104–127*)? Laypersons are being asked to decide such questions not only in California but in other states as well – judgments that require sorting through complex and contradictory information. One might as well ask the electorate to choose a treatment for AIDS or to select the design of the next space station.⁶ How schools should teach LEP students has become a highly technical issue. It has also become a highly political one, which invites simplistic and demagogic answers.

Again the paradox. In its path to acceptance, bilingual education followed the course of numerous reforms of the 1960s. Conceived as an innovative approach to a social problem, it was taken up as a demand by ethnic militants and parents' organizations, supported with federal funds, accepted by school boards, studied by researchers, embraced by practitioners, and sustained by a corps of experts, lawyers, and bureaucrats. In short, it became institutionalized. At the same time, however, these currents were eroding its political support. To the extent that bilingual education has become the domain of professionals, it is less of a community concern, less of a social movement.

Government agencies, educators' associations, and school districts have done little to explain the pedagogy to outsiders, including parents, many of whom are new to the United States and have no memory of earlier struggles for bilingual education. The broader public, which has never been clear about the rationale for native-language instruction, is increasingly skeptical of its results. With the rise of English-only activity, assimilationist rhetoric has won a growing acceptance. Now it is making inroads into language-minority communities. Surveyed on whether they would favor an initiative to 'require all public school instruction to be conducted in English and for students not fluent in English to be placed in a short-term English immersion program,' 84 percent of Hispanic Californians answered in the affirmative (Los Angeles Times Poll, 1997).⁷

There is no question that the parents of LEP students continue to feel strongly about the civil-rights goals of bilingual education. Yet it is also

clear that in the 1990s language minority communities are less vocal on its behalf than in the 1970s. Defending the program's effectiveness has become largely a job for professionals. Whether bilingual instruction provides an antidote for school failure, whether it teaches English effectively, whether it safeguards children's rights under *Lau* ... these questions are usually left to specialists who can explain the complexities of educational research. Few members of the public seem interested in such explanations, which contradict cherished myths on how languages are learned and how immigrant ancestors 'made it' without special help.

Moreover, the voters exhibit a growing impatience with government programs that benefit immigrants and racial minorities. By approving Proposition 187 in 1994, Californians instructed school officials to hunt down and expel the children of 'illegal aliens.' With Proposition 209 two years later, they chose to outlaw all forms of affirmative action. In 1998, disregarding the advice of professionals in the field, they voted to dismantle bilingual education. Meanwhile, Latino and Asian American politicians, who once rallied liberal supporters behind programs serving immigrants, now sense ambivalent feelings among their own constituents. Hence their wariness about countering attacks like Proposition 227.

Thus, to the extent that bilingual education relies heavily on expert opinion, its political viability becomes increasingly tenuous. This is true not only because experts are routinely divided on pedagogical matters. In addition, many researchers today are sensitive to the charge that their work has become politicized. So they are more guarded in expressing support for bilingual approaches than they were in the 1980s. A recent report by the National Research Council strived for even-handedness, noting the benefits of both native-language and English-only instruction, even though the panel comprised several prominent enthusiasts of 'additive bilingualism' (August and Hakuta, 1997).⁸ Bilingual teachers and administrators continue to champion their programs without equivocation. Yet such views are easily dismissed as expressions of narrow self-interest – a perennial line of attack by conservative critics (see, e.g. Thernstrom, 1980; Chávez, 1991).

Without a broader and firmer political base, the future of bilingual education would appear uncertain, to say the least. Where is the needed support to be found? The most obvious undeveloped sources are language-minority families and communities. What has kept them from playing a larger advocacy role? Several factors have already been noted: professionalization of bilingual programs, poor communication by the schools, timidity among elected officials, and immigrants' inexperience in a new political system.

Equally important is the peculiar tradition of language rights – or lack thereof – in the United States

Language Rights, American Style

In most of the world, language rights are understood in two ways: '(1) the right of freedom from discrimination on the basis of language; and (2) the right to use your language(s) in the activities of communal life' (Macías, 1979: 41). International treaties to which the United States is a signatory, including the United Nations Charter and the International Declaration of Human Rights, recognize either one or both varieties. Such treaty obligations make these language rights a part of US law – at least theoretically. Nevertheless, they remain largely foreign to our legal traditions.

The United States has frequently addressed the language needs of its citizens on political, economic, or moral grounds. During the 19th century, for example, a dozen states and territories authorized minority-language instruction in public schools; elsewhere it was often provided without official sanction (Kloss, 1998). Yet there were no constitutional obstacles to terminating such policies and mandating English-only instruction, as most states chose to do during the World War I era. Some Latino advocates have argued that, under the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, Spanish-speakers are *entitled* to bilingual-bicultural education in the Southwest. In fact, the treaty makes no explicit mention of language rights and such interpretations have been rejected by US courts (e.g. *López Tijerina v. Henry*, 1969).

Language rights exist in the United States only as a component of other rights, in particular the Fourteenth Amendment guarantee of 'equal protection' under law without regard to race or national origin. *Lau v. Nichols* (1974) was decided on similar grounds, relying on Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Taking another approach in *Meyer v. Nebraska* (1923), the Supreme Court struck down restrictions on foreign-language instruction as an unconstitutional violation of 'due process' guarantees:

While this court has not attempted to define with exactness the liberty thus guaranteed ... without doubt, it denotes not merely freedom from bodily restraint but also the right of the individual to contract, to engage in any of the common occupations of life, to acquire useful knowledge, to marry, establish a home and bring up children, to worship God according to the dictates of his own conscience, and generally to enjoy those privileges long recognized at common law as essential to the orderly pursuit of happiness by free men. The established doctrine is that this liberty may not be interfered with, under

the guise of protecting the public interest, by legislative action which is arbitrary or without reasonable relation to some purpose within the competency of the state to effect. (p. 402)

Among these implicit rights, the court enumerated a German language teacher's 'right thus to teach and the right of parents to engage him so to instruct their children.'

Significantly, despite the breadth of constitutional liberties it found to be guaranteed by implication, the *Meyer* court said nothing about *community* rights to use and maintain a language other than English. Its omission is consistent with the Anglo-American tradition of common law, which almost always endows rights to individuals rather than to groups. This has tended to discourage the recognition of language rights, which have limited meaning outside a collective context. For example, the *Lau* decision defines a LEP student's right to special assistance designed to overcome the language barrier and make academic instruction comprehensible – not an ethnic group's right to perpetuate its language via vernacular (non-English) education. Restricted in this way, Magnet (1990: 293) argues, language rights are ultimately meaningless:

The right to utilize a language is absolutely empty of content unless it implies a linguistic community which understands the speaker and with whom that speaker can communicate. ... Language rights are collective rights. They are exercised by individuals only as part of a collectivity or a group. Legal protection of language rights, therefore, means protection of that linguistic community, that community of speakers and hearers, *vis-à-vis* the larger community which would impinge upon it or restrict its right as a group to exist.

Canada's policy of official bilingualism incorporates this philosophy. In essence, according to a former Commissioner of Official Languages, it guarantees the francophone minority's 'right *not* to assimilate, the right to maintain a certain difference' (Yalden, 1981: 79; emphasis in original). Besides entitling citizens to federal government services in both English and French, Canada provides subsidies to numerous indigenous and immigrant minorities for the purpose of linguistic maintenance. The United States, by contrast, has tended to resist such policies in principle, if not always in practice. Except in matters of religion, it would be hard to cite any collective 'right' not to assimilate ever guaranteed by federal or state governments. Nor has there been any formal recognition of a right to mother-tongue schooling for any non-anglophone group, immigrant or indigenous.

Nevertheless, American linguistic minorities have succeeded in maintaining distinct communities, sometimes for several generations, with

varying degrees of toleration or accommodation from authorities. Bilingual and vernacular education were widely, if inconsistently, available from the Colonial Era until World War I. In 1900, contemporary surveys reported that 600,000 elementary school children, public and parochial, were receiving part or all of their instruction in the German language. This figure, which Kloss (1998) regards as overly conservative, was equivalent to 4 percent of the elementary school population at the time – probably larger than the proportion of children in all bilingual classrooms today.⁹

This era of accommodation ended following World War I, a period when speaking languages other than English, especially German, came to be associated with disloyalty to the United States. Wartime fears strengthened a campaign to ‘Americanize the immigrant,’ especially in linguistic matters. This in turn had a major impact on the schools. By 1923, thirty-four states had adopted laws banning native-language instruction and, in some cases, foreign-language teaching in the early grades (Leibowitz, 1969). As a result, bilingual education largely disappeared until the early 1960s, when it was revived by Cuban exiles in Dade County, Florida.

The Once and Future Politics of Bilingualism

What can be learned from for early American ‘traditions’ of bilingual education that might be relevant to its present political plight? In particular, what were its ideological and political foundations before the modern era?

First, it should be noted that bilingual and vernacular schools were often the product of practical necessity or local choice. Before the 20th century, fully English-proficient teachers were unavailable in large expanses of the rural Midwest, New Mexico, southern California, Louisiana, and northern New England. Where language minorities commanded local majorities, they usually controlled their own education systems. The first public schools in the state of Texas, established by the municipality of New Braunfels in the 1850s, operated mostly in German (Kloss, 1998). At about the same time, the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma established a system of twenty-one bilingual schools and two academies, achieving higher literacy rates in English and Cherokee than the neighboring states of Arkansas and Texas could manage in English alone (US Senate, 1969).

Bilingual education also gained a foothold in major cities including St Louis, Indianapolis, Milwaukee, and Cincinnati, which ran extensive German-English programs for several decades. School systems made conscious decisions to accommodate the wishes of immigrant parents. More than five million Germans arrived between 1830 and 1890, and most

settled in the Ohio and Mississippi valleys. Notwithstanding their religious, cultural, and political diversity, by and large these immigrants were united on the value of German-language instruction as the key to a treasured heritage. For parents, language maintenance was usually the chief goal of bilingual instruction.

Meanwhile, public school officials saw themselves in competition with parochial schools for immigrant students. Providing minority-language instruction was conceived a way to entice parents to support the Common School and thus to draw their communities into the mainstream of American life. William Torrey Harris, school superintendent in St Louis and later US Commissioner of Education, perceived no contradiction in fostering bilingualism and assimilation simultaneously. Like other educational leaders – and unlike most immigrant parents – he saw the primary goal of bilingual education as teaching the dominant culture, including the English language, as efficiently as possible. His rationale, however, was more political than pedagogical. ‘If separate nationalities keep their own [Lutheran and Catholic] schools,’ Harris wrote in 1870, ‘it will result that the Anglo- and German-American youth will not intermingle and caste-distinctions will grow up.’ On the other hand, ‘if the German children can learn to read and write the language of the fatherland in the public schools, they will not need separate ones’ (Schlossman, 1983: 152).

Harris believed strongly in the public schools’ mission to ‘Americanize the immigrant.’ Yet he differed from later assimilationists in his conviction that the process would proceed more efficiently by voluntary rather than coercive means. In St Louis, his approach proved successful. After fifteen years of German bilingual programs, the percentage of German American children attending the public schools had increased from 20 percent to 80 percent (Schlossman, 1983).

By offering bilingual instruction in St Louis and elsewhere, schools recognized no language rights in the strict sense. Nevertheless, they paid homage to a strong tradition in American education: parents’ prerogative to have a say in their children’s schooling. However vaguely defined in legal terms, *the right of parental choice* has been revered as a political principle. Thus it has served at times as a powerful rallying cry for diverse groups of parents, including language minorities. In 1889, when German Americans learned that Wisconsin and Illinois had imposed English-only instruction on parochial as well as public schools, they put aside sectarian divisions, organized to defeat the ruling Republican Party at the next election, and soon repealed the legislation (Crawford, 1992a). In the 1960s, when Mexican Americans demanded an end to sink-or-swim neglect,

they marshaled sufficient moral and legal authority to win bilingual education subsidies, court orders, and civil-rights enforcement.

Parent activism can only flourish, however, when armed with clarity of purpose. To the extent that the parents of LEP children are uncertain about the rationale for bilingual education and alienated from the professionals who control it, they will remain passive players in the public policy debate. A majority of these parents may continue to favor the program. But without mass goals and leadership to rally behind, there can be no 'bilingual movement' to provide needed political support. Indeed, parents' passivity may be mistaken for acquiescence to anti-bilingual policies – as it was in California's approval of Proposition 227.

If current trends continue, the consequences could be drastic: Bilingual educators find themselves increasingly isolated and hard-pressed to resist attacks. LEP students enjoy fewer options, as many school districts limit access to native-language instruction and others convert to English-only models altogether. The nation's thirty-year experiment with bilingual education, despite its success in many schools and its benefits to many children, is branded a failure in the public mind. A generation of experience and research is discarded, as the pedagogy is relegated to marginal status. The question for bilingual educators and advocates is whether they can regain the confidence, understanding, and allegiance of their core constituency – language-minority communities – in time to rewrite this grim scenario.

Notes

1. In a tendentious history of these events, Thernstrom (1980) claims: 'The chairmen of the House and Senate committees did not call witnesses – in the sense of experts on the educational and political questions raised by the legislation – but (with few exceptions) lobbyists. Ethnic activists – mostly Hispanics – came to testify on the bill's necessity' (p. 6). In fact, only 26 of the 144 witnesses were lobbyists for community and advocacy groups; about half had Hispanic surnames.
2. There was no separate recorded vote on bilingual education in either the House or the Senate.
3. This situation may be changing, as Republicans begin to make overtures to Hispanic voters. A new English Plus resolution was introduced in 1998 by John McCain of Arizona and nine other Republican senators.
4. OCR has relied instead on the *Castañeda* standard for determining whether school districts are meeting their obligations toward LEP students (Crawford, 1996b). This three-part test was developed by a federal appeals court in interpreting the Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974. Reaffirming the *Lau v. Nichols* decision, the law requires school districts to take 'appropriate action to overcome language barriers that impede equal participation by its students in its instructional programs' (§1703[f]). More than vague 'good faith' efforts

are required, the court ruled in *Castañeda v. Pickard* (1981). A program serving LEP students must meet the following criteria:

- It must be based on 'a sound educational theory' endorsed by one or more experts.
 - It must be 'implemented effectively,' with adequate resources and personnel.
 - After a trial period, it must be evaluated as effective in overcoming language handicaps or its weaknesses must be rectified.
5. At parents' request, 'waivers' of the English-only rule may be allowed for older LEP children and those with 'special needs,' but they are subject to restrictions. Teachers, administrators, and school board members who fail to provide English-only instruction may be sued and held 'personally liable' for financial damages (English Language in Public Schools, 1998: §§311, 320).
 6. These examples are not entirely far-fetched, considering California's attachment to government-by-initiative. In early 1998, there were five measures certified for the June ballot and forty-three others being circulated for the November ballot, ranging from a proposal to legalize casino gambling to an effort to ban the sale of horse meat for human consumption.
 7. In fairness, it should be noted that this question poorly summarized the provisions of the English for the Children initiative, such as neglecting to mention its ban on bilingual education programs. Later polls showed contradictory results – for example, Spanish-language media in Los Angeles found that 88 percent of parents with children enrolled in bilingual programs were satisfied with them. The major exit poll on June 2 concluded that Latinos had rejected Proposition 227, 63 to 37 percent (Los Angeles Times–CNN Poll, 1998). Yet even this level of support is substantially higher than in the past.
 8. Several panel members had been part of the Stanford Working Group on Federal Programs for Limited-English-Proficient Students, which influenced the Clinton Administration to expand support for developmental bilingual education (Hakuta *et al.*, 1993).
 9. Kloss (1998) argues that one million – or 7 percent – would be a more reasonable figure for 1900. Unfortunately, data-gathering in this area has barely improved since that time. Based on reports from forty-eight states and the District of Columbia, the US Department of Education estimates that 3,378,861 students in public and private K-12 schools were limited-English-proficient in 1996–97 (Macías, 1998). While these counts vary in reliability, states typically report that no more than one-third of eligible students are enrolled in fully bilingual classrooms. Extrapolated nationwide, that generous assumption would yield an estimate of about 1.1 million US students receiving native-language instruction in 1996–97 – or less than 2.5 percent of the total K-12 enrollment of 45,650,352.

The Proposition 227 Campaign: A Post Mortem

Californians decisively rejected bilingual education on June 2, 1998, approving a mandate for English-only instruction known as Proposition 227. The vote was so one-sided – 61 to 39 percent – that it is difficult to say what, if anything, could have altered the outcome. Since the election, two viewpoints have emerged. One is that anti-immigrant sentiment among voters made this ballot campaign, like other English-only initiatives before it, virtually unstoppable. The other is that, armed with a different strategy, bilingual education advocates might have beaten back the assault.

In this disagreement there is more at stake than a desire to apportion blame, or to deny responsibility, for a disastrous defeat. The two viewpoints reflect conflicting analyses of why Proposition 227 passed, what it represents as a political phenomenon, and how advocates for language-minority students should respond. The implications of this argument extend well beyond California. A new wave of anti-bilingual activism is spreading to other states, school districts, and the US Congress.

Few would dispute that issues of demographic change – immigration, race, ethnicity, and language – have preoccupied and polarized Californians in the 1990s. Public schools have become a special point of concern. The enrollment of limited-English-proficient (LEP) children has more than doubled over the past decade, to 1.4 million; English learners now represent one-quarter of California's K-12 students and one-third of those entering the first grade (California Department of Education, 1998). This remarkable growth stems not only from rising immigration but also from higher birthrates in language-minority communities. Between 1990 and 1996, as the state's population increased by 2.6 million, nine out of ten of the new Californians were Latinos or Asian Americans. These groups expanded to 29 percent and 11 percent of state residents, respectively, while African-Americans held steady at 7 percent and non-Hispanic whites slipped to 53 percent (California Department of Finance, 1998). Approaching minority status for the first time since the Gold Rush, many white Californians feel threatened by the impending shift in political power and resentful about paying taxes to benefit 'other' people's chil-

dren (Schrag, 1998). Still, in the June 1998 election, they accounted for 69 percent of the voters statewide, African-Americans 14 percent, Latinos 12 percent, and Asians 3 percent (Los Angeles Times–CNN Poll, 1998).¹

Laurie Olsen (1999), a leader of the No on 227 campaign, argues that ethnic factors were key to the initiative's victory. From the outset, she reports, opinion research revealed 'a reservoir of anger, distrust, and even hate focused on bilingual education, bilingual educators, and immigrants – particularly Spanish-speaking immigrants.' Proposition 227 successfully exploited 'a set of fears and beliefs of a voting California [that was] unrepresentative of the state – whiter, older, only 15% with children in public schools.' A majority of this electorate expressed 'the sense of Spanish ruining this country, the sense of our nation in threat. The sense that upholding English as the language of this nation is a stance of protecting a way of life – this outweighed every argument we could wage to try to defeat 227. This is what we were up against and still are.' Such minds were closed to considering the case for bilingual education, Olsen concludes. 'It's not just that they don't understand it – they don't like it' (Olsen, 1999: 31–32, 41).

Other opponents of Proposition 227 acknowledge the role of nativist attitudes, but question whether they motivated a majority of Californians who voted yes. Jim Shultz (1998), director of the Democracy Center, a progressive advocacy group in San Francisco, attributes the initiative's victory primarily to mistakes by the No on 227 campaign. In particular, he cites:

- a strategy of focusing on 'tangential issues' rather than on explaining bilingual education in terms the voters could understand;
- refusal to take seriously complaints about the quality of bilingual programs, which were poorly serving numerous LEP students;
- insistence on blocking compromise bills in the California legislature, which might have taken the steam out of the Yes on 227 campaign by giving local school districts greater flexibility in teaching English learners; and
- failure to mobilize grassroots support in language-minority communities and especially among the parents of children in bilingual programs.

To assess the validity of these conflicting analyses, it is necessary to examine the public debate over Proposition 227, the role of the news media, the political agenda behind the initiative, and the responses of bilingual educators, researchers, and advocates.

'English for the Children'

The ballot initiative was conceived, financed, and directed by Ron Unz, a multimillionaire software developer and a former Republican candidate for governor. He entitled it English for the Children, a brilliant stroke of packaging. Here was a goal that no one could dispute. Who wanted to 'vote against' English – or against children? The label also established a false choice in voters' minds: *either* teach students the language of the country *or* give them bilingual education. Perhaps most important, it focused debate on practical issues of educational effectiveness, avoiding the racial innuendoes of other English-only campaigns and thereby broadening the initiative's appeal.

Unlike previous English-only advocates, Unz made special efforts to 'decouple' opposition to bilingual education from 'anti-immigrant and anti-Latino views' (English for the Children, 1997a). He spurned the support of Governor Pete Wilson, the most visible backer of Proposition 187, California's crackdown on undocumented immigration enacted in 1994, a measure that Unz had actively opposed. He picked fights with nativist groups and provoked them into opposing the initiative.² He filled campaign posts with Latinos and Asians, including Jaime Escalante, the legendary math teacher of *Stand and Deliver* fame, and Gloria Matta Tuchman, a first-grade teacher and candidate for state superintendent of public instruction.³ Rather than attack immigrants for speaking other languages, Unz campaigned in their communities for children's 'right' to learn English. In short, he posed as their advocate against unresponsive schools.

Unz claimed that Proposition 227 was inspired by a 1996 protest against bilingual education at the Ninth Street Elementary School in downtown Los Angeles. He alleged:

Immigrant parents were forced to begin a public boycott after the school administration refused to allow their children to be taught English. Enormous numbers of California schoolchildren today leave years of schooling with limited spoken English and almost no ability to read or write English. We believe that the unity and prosperity our of society is [sic] gravely threatened by government efforts to prevent young immigrant children from learning English. (English for the Children, 1997b)

Ninth Street became a source of images and sound bites that were, by all accounts, highly effective in generating support for the initiative.

What actually happened there was more complicated. The protest was orchestrated by Alice Callaghan, an Episcopal priest and community

activist, who ran a day-care center on which the boycotting parents depended; whether all of them participated freely in the strike remains a matter of dispute. Before pulling their children out of the Ninth Street School, none of the parents had ever requested transfers to all-English instruction – an option that would have spared the students two weeks of disrupted schooling (Crawford, 1998a). Of course, if the matter had been resolved without a confrontation, it would have failed to generate the sensational headlines that the organizer had sought: *'80 Students Stay Out of School in Latino Boycott ... Bilingual Schooling Is Failing, Parents Say'* (Pyle, 1996a, 1996b). Callaghan went on to play a leadership role in English for the Children.

Unz and Callaghan's version of the Ninth Street story became a central myth of the campaign: that bilingual education was unpopular among the very groups it was intended to serve. This claim hardly seemed unreasonable when the first Los Angeles Times Poll (1997) on Proposition 227 reported that 84 percent of Latinos favored the measure (as compared with 80 percent of all respondents). Similar findings appeared throughout the campaign. In the event, 63 percent of Latinos voted against it (Los Angeles Times–CNN Poll, 1998), but this revelation came too late to correct the voters' misimpression. It is likely that many Californians with no direct knowledge of bilingual education reasoned, 'If the parents of children in these programs don't support them, why should I?'

Why indeed? Californians of all backgrounds were dissatisfied with the public schools, following two decades of funding constraints that began with another ballot initiative, Proposition 13, a property-tax limitation adopted in 1978. From one of the most generous states in per-pupil spending, California had slumped to 41st place (Schrag, 1998). By the mid-1990s, students' reading and mathematics scores were among the lowest in the nation⁴ – a trend that produced feverish media coverage and back-to-basics nostrums such as phonics instruction, mandated by state law in 1997.

Unz exploited this general discontent as well as a special concern about immigrant students: Why were the schools so slow to teach them English? Why did it take these children four or more years to enter the mainstream? Bilingual approaches are often counter-intuitive, not only for members of the public but also for the parents of English learners. Yet these were questions that school officials had rarely addressed – at least in a way that was accessible to laypersons.

Meanwhile, the California Association for Bilingual Education (CABE) used its clout with Latino lawmakers to resist perennial calls for 'reform.' On several occasions, the California Senate voted to give districts greater

discretion in educating English learners, by relaxing a state mandate for native-language instruction, but each time these bipartisan bills met a roadblock in the Assembly. In the 1970s a prescriptive law had been necessary to induce most school districts to try bilingual education.⁵ Now that many – if not all – districts had embraced the program, it is unclear whether lifting the mandate would have had a significant pedagogical impact. It is almost certain, however, that a compromise would have lessened the political pressure for more radical changes. It would also have clarified the threat of Proposition 227 to local control of the curriculum. Nevertheless, CABE held out for stronger accountability provisions in the bill – requiring schools to document the progress of students if they were reassigned to non-bilingual programs – which the sponsors were unwilling to accept. So, in September 1997, CABE's allies again killed the proposal in the Assembly Education Committee.⁶

Educators' failure to respond to legitimate concerns about bilingual instruction, combined with their backroom deal-making in Sacramento, contributed to an image of bureaucratic arrogance and intransigence – an easy target for Ron Unz. He modeled his campaign along the populist lines typical of most ballot initiatives: mad-as-hell voters versus a system 'completely gridlocked' by special interests (English for the Children, 1997a). In particular, Unz (1997) demonized bilingual educators as 'profiteers' who were 'financially rewarded for not teaching English' with 'as much as \$1 billion' in annual subsidies.⁷

Framing the Issues

Unz's attack strategy proved appealing to the news media, which gave massive coverage to Proposition 227, as compared with other ballot initiatives and primary races. More than 600 newspaper articles (as well as countless radio and television broadcasts) appeared on the anti-bilingual initiative in the six months before election day.⁸ Most of these reports featured inflammatory charges by Ron Unz, rarely accompanied by effective counter-arguments. By and large, the press defined the debate as Unz did: not 'How can programs for English learners be improved?' or 'Do school districts need greater flexibility in teaching these students?' but 'Should bilingual education be eliminated in favor of intensive English instruction?' This way of framing the issue – as a misleading either/or decision – clearly benefitted the Yes on 227 campaign. It also cast opponents in an unfamiliar and uncomfortable role: defenders of the status quo.

Media bias is a complex phenomenon – reflecting various external influences, internal workings of the news business, and the culture of journalism (Ryan, 1991). All of these sources contributed to the distorted and unbalanced coverage of Proposition 227. While a thorough analysis

is beyond the scope of this article, several related factors deserve mention.

The power of narrative

Journalists tend to seek out and report what readers find compelling: human dramas, characters, and situations. So much the better if these are counter-intuitive, 'man bites dog' stories. English for the Children made skillful use of the Ninth Street boycott, a ready-made narrative so sensational that it was retold by virtually every reporter who covered the campaign. (Yet almost none ventured any original reporting that might have spoiled the myth; see Crawford, 1998c.) By contrast, success stories for bilingual education – more difficult to ferret out and describe in dramatic terms – received little or no attention from California's major media outlets.

Emphasis on personalities

In the celebrity-driven journalism of the 1990s, leaders of the Proposition 227 campaign were seen as unusual characters and thus 'good copy.' Reporters profiled them in lavish and often flattering detail: Callaghan as a self-styled liberal going against the tide of 'political correctness'; Escalante and Matta Tuchman as courageous Latino teachers defying their own ethnic leadership; and Unz himself as a white-knight reformer who was willing to spend his own fortune to promote the cause. On the other hand, the initiative's opponents – researchers, administrators, teachers, and civil-rights advocates – stimulated little interest among the press, except when stereotyped as faceless bureaucrats or worse.⁹

Reportage by template

Clichés are endemic to news reporting, owing to deadline and peer pressures, not to mention the skepticism of editors toward new perspectives. Challenging the conventional wisdom can bring rewards, but it entails even greater risks. So, for the career-oriented journalist, it is generally prudent to stick with familiar story-lines. Unz was effective in supplying them: 'Well-Intentioned Social Program Fails To Work as Promised' ... 'Government Funding Creates Perverse Incentives Against Meeting Stated Goals' ... 'Stubborn Bureaucrats Defend Narrow Self-Interest.' Such exposés of official failure, incompetence, and malfeasance are the stock-in-trade of contemporary journalism. In covering Proposition 227, most media were content to use these templates to organize whatever facts they happened to gather.¹⁰ Opponents of the initiative had nothing comparable to offer. A story-line about bilingual programs working as intended – such as 'Students Make Slow But Steady Progress' – was seldom regarded as news.

Conventions of political reporting

Bilingual education is a school story, a science story, and a social change story, in addition to being a political story. But because it is controversial, journalists tend to class it exclusively under the final rubric, which is governed by special rules. In political reporting, all viewpoints are presumed to be fundamentally subjective. Unlike, say, in science writing, there is no obligation to investigate the objective truth of contending claims – only to offer each ‘side’ a fair hearing. Thus unsupported charges may be counterposed against research-backed conclusions, without giving readers any guidance in sorting out facts and falsehoods. The news media’s approach to Proposition 227 could be summed up as follows: Give equal credence to the political critics of bilingual education on the one hand and to the field’s ‘vested interests’ – researchers and practitioners – on the other. And let the best sound-bite win.

Cultivating controversy

By nature, journalism must simplify subject matter to make it meaningful to a wide audience. Often this means highlighting the sharpest points of conflict – in this case, language of instruction. Since Proposition 227 framed the debate in this way, the intensive media focus on bilingual education, pro or con, was hardly surprising. By neglecting other issues, however, it implied that language of instruction was the crucial variable – perhaps the only variable – in the success or failure of English learners. So it is likely that voters paid little heed to factors such as students’ poverty and lack of access to reading materials, the shortage of trained teachers, and various resource constraints. No doubt many reasoned that if LEP students were faring poorly, and if ‘the current system [was] centered on use of native language instruction’ (English for the Children, 1997a), then a radical change was in order.

Making the Case

To indict the ‘current system,’ Unz seized on a misleading figure from the California Department of Education. Since the early 1990s, about 5 to 7 percent of LEP students had been ‘redesignated’ as fluent in English each year. He dubbed this the ‘95 percent annual failure rate’ (English for the Children, 1997b), a memorable sound-bite that was circulated widely by journalists. Seldom was it noted that, owing to an estimated shortage of 27,000 bilingual teachers, less than 30 percent of California’s English learners were enrolled in bilingual classrooms and only 20 percent were taught by fully certified instructors (Gold, 1997; California Department of Education, 1998). Thus, if programs were indeed ‘failing,’ it was more

reasonable to blame English-only methodologies.¹¹ Unfortunately, this logic seemed to elude most reporters covering the debate.

Nor did the news media ask many questions about Unz's one-year standard for English acquisition, despite its lack of scientific support. A considerable body of research shows that, on average, academic proficiency in a second language takes an average of at least five years to develop (Cummins, 1996; Collier and Thomas, 1989). In a longitudinal study comparing well-implemented program models, Ramírez *et al.* (1991) found that, after one year, only 4 percent of English learners in *structured immersion*, 12 percent of those in *late-exit* bilingual education, and 13 percent of those in *early-exit* bilingual education had become fluent in English. Yet such findings – perhaps because they were counter-intuitive and required explanation – were rarely mentioned by journalists.

Dearth of Data

Researchers' explanations of program effects were complex and often unsatisfying to reporters looking for bottom-line conclusions. A report by the National Research Council (August and Hakuta, 1997: 138) did little to clarify matters. It criticized the 'extreme politicization' of evaluation studies in bilingual education and pronounced them inconclusive on which approach is most effective for LEP students. Several commentators took this to mean that all research in the field was 'worthless' as a guide to policymaking (e.g. Rodríguez, 1997). Meanwhile, most media ignored a significant study that appeared during the campaign. In a meta-analysis of the research literature, Greene (1998) reported a small but significant edge for bilingual pedagogies. (If anything, this review underestimated their benefits; see Krashen, 1998).

With characteristic pragmatism, journalists continued to ask, in effect: 'If bilingual education works, why are so many Latinos faring poorly in school?' With limited scientific data on outcomes, it was a difficult question to answer. 'Redesignation rates' remained – despite their flaws – the California Department of Education's only 'objective' gauge for measuring the progress of English learners. School districts also lacked much hard evidence to counter the '95 percent failure rate.' Certainly they had nothing so dramatic to support the effectiveness of bilingual programs. With some exceptions, such as San Francisco and Calexico, districts offered little response to Unz's charges and rarely tried to showcase exemplary schools.

One long-anticipated source of empirical proof never materialized. Six months before the vote, Thomas and Collier (1997) published a detailed account of their research comparing the academic progress of LEP students in various program models. Their multi-year research, funded by the US

Department of Education, boasted 'the largest database collected and analyzed in the field of language minority education, to date,' encompassing '42,317 student records' (pp. 30, 54). The study's focus was directly relevant to the policy debate in California, and its reported conclusions were 'overwhelmingly clear' (p. 49): English learners performed best in programs that used the most native-language instruction, such as developmental and two-way bilingual education, and worst in English-only programs. What better evidence to use in countering the claims of Ron Unz? The only problem was that the researchers, for reasons never fully explained,¹² failed – in the view of colleagues – to publish sufficient data to support their conclusions. This was a consensus verdict not only among the political critics but, more importantly, among the academic defenders of bilingual education. Despite entreaties from various quarters, Thomas and Collier declined to release additional data. Other researchers therefore declined to cite their work. So, to the frustration of those working to educate the voters about Proposition 227 and dispel misinformation about bilingual programs, the Thomas-Collier study offered no help at all.

This disappointment was compounded, as we shall see, by the No on 227 campaign strategy of avoiding issues of pedagogical effectiveness. Left unchallenged, the 'failure' of bilingual education thus became part of the conventional wisdom, espoused even by editorial writers and Democratic politicians who opposed the initiative as overly extreme (e.g. *Sacramento Bee*, 1998; Davis, 1998).

Provisions of 227

Unz's remedy was indeed radical: a statewide mandate for 'sheltered English immersion ... not normally intended to exceed one year.' After that arbitrary period, LEP students would be transferred to mainstream classrooms. Parents would still be able to request bilingual instruction, but for children under age ten, such 'waivers' would be restricted to those with 'special physical, emotional, psychological, or educational needs.' Educators who 'willfully and repeatedly' violated the law requiring them to teach 'overwhelmingly in English' could be sued and 'held personally liable' for financial damages. None of these provisions could be repealed or amended without a two-thirds vote of the legislature and the governor's signature, or another ballot initiative (English Language in Public Schools, 1998). In sum, Proposition 227 would impose an unproven pedagogy, limit the options of local school boards, restrict parental choice, and punish educators who resisted. Barring a successful challenge in court, it would be virtually written in stone.¹³

Nevertheless, the pros and cons of bilingual education – not of the initiative itself – commanded center stage throughout the campaign.

Because Unz avoided nativist rhetoric and targeted pedagogical issues, few commentators saw the initiative as an attack on ethnic minorities. Rather, they portrayed it as a choice between a 'depressing status quo,' 'the dismal experiment known as bilingual education' on the one hand, and 'a meat-ax, "one-size-fits-all" approach to a complicated issue,' 'a blunt instrument' requiring schools to stress English on the other (*New York Times*, 1998; *Stockton Record*, 1998; *San Francisco Chronicle*, 1998, *Contra Costa Times*, 1998). Given these alternatives, most voters opted for the latter.

Deciphering the Vote

Californians were clearly expressing their frustration. But why? Were they mainly fed up with immigration and its social costs? Or were they worried about the life chances of schoolchildren who failed to learn English? On the basis of limited evidence, many seemed willing to believe the worst about bilingual education and bilingual educators – which suggests at least a subliminal ethnic bias (Crawford, 1998b). Yet media coverage of the campaign rarely offered much to challenge such perceptions, denying voters the information they needed to make an unbiased decision (Crawford, 1998c; Media Alliance, 1998).

Few opinion surveys are helpful in sorting out supporters' motives. Pollsters generally characterized the initiative as an intensive approach to the teaching of English, while downplaying its extreme provisions. Not surprisingly, most of their surveys registered overwhelming support among all sectors of the electorate.¹⁴ One exception was a Los Angeles Times Poll (1998) that probed more deeply into attitudes toward bilingual education and the stated reasons for supporting or opposing Proposition 227. It reported that 72 percent of likely yes voters explained their preference by saying: 'If you live in America you need to speak English.' Of course, this statement is subject to various interpretations. It may convey either a resentment toward immigrants who speak other languages or a genuine concern for their social and economic advancement. Or both.

Like other ethnically charged issues, bilingual education can generate conflicting feelings. No doubt many Californians do feel threatened by the cultural transformation of their communities. For some, the pervasiveness of Spanish or Chinese has come to symbolize a range of unsettling changes brought on by immigration, leading them to support English-only measures (Crawford, 1992a). Such reactions may increase voters' impatience to teach English to LEP children, as well as skepticism toward approaches that seem to delay the process. Yet one need not resent linguistic minorities to worry about their progress toward integration

and self-sufficiency, or to question school programs that segregate their children for extended periods. Immigrants also worry about problems of assimilation, and they have not always agreed among themselves (see, e.g. Kloss, 1998 on German-Americans).

No doubt some voters rejected bilingual education out of ethnic animus. Other than focus-group anecdotes, however, there is a dearth of evidence to support Olsen's (1999) contention that a majority of Californians did so. Unlike the debate over Proposition 187 four years earlier, the 1998 campaign rhetoric featured no direct assaults on immigrants. Significantly, only 12 percent of likely voters who opposed Proposition 227 perceived it as racist or believed that it 'discriminates against non-English-speaking students' (Los Angeles Times Poll, 1998).

Poll findings also suggest that many supporters of the initiative were ambivalent about its restrictions. Or perhaps they simply failed to read the fine print. A poll by Spanish-language media in Los Angeles found that 68 percent of Latino parents favored bilingual education, including 88 percent of those with children in bilingual programs; yet 43 percent also expressed support for Proposition 227 (Rivera, 1998). Another survey found all voters evenly divided on whether to impose 'one uniform standard in California for teaching children with limited English skills' or whether to give local districts 'more flexibility to choose the method they think is best.' At the same time, 61 percent favored at least 'a year or two' of bilingual instruction (Los Angeles Times Poll, 1998). Yet, on election day, 61 percent voted to approve a measure overriding local option and dismantling bilingual programs.

If the voters were so perplexed or conflicted about the initiative and its likely impact, one might reasonably question the effectiveness of the No on 227 campaign. Before reviewing its strategy and organizing efforts, however, it is helpful to analyze what it was up against: a more sophisticated version of English-only politics than Californians had seen before.

Language Restrictionism of a New Type

Prior to Ron Unz, English-only advocates had hesitated to stage a frontal assault on bilingual education. Instead, they focused their legislative efforts on declaring English the official language of various states and the federal government. US English (1991) had long complained about bilingual education in its advertising campaigns, funded academic critics of the program, and supported 'local flexibility' in the education of LEP students. Yet its Official English proposals always exempted bilingual education from restrictions on the use of other languages.¹⁵ Congressional sponsors of H.R. 123, the so-called English Language Empowerment Act

of 1996, also took pains to emphasize that it would have no effect on 'the teaching of languages.' As passed by the House of Representatives, the bill declared English the sole official language of the US government and banned most federal operations in other tongues (*see pp.* 39–48).

At first impression, the idea of Official English had seemed innocuous to most Anglo-Americans. Within six months after Californians passed such a ballot initiative in 1986, similar legislation was considered by thirty-seven other states (Crawford, 1987). Most of these bills appeared to be ceremonial gestures reaffirming the importance of English. Gradually, however, the public has learned there is more at stake. Although the proposed restrictions on other languages are often trivial in practice, they express a spirit of intolerance. English-only measures are deeply offensive to ethnic minorities – immigrant and otherwise – who feel their patriotism is being impugned and their culture denigrated. And to what end? Advocates have failed to make a convincing case that English is 'threatened' as the nation's 'common bond' merely because government offers occasional services in other languages. Nor have they been able to explain how enacting gratuitous insults toward minority groups will somehow 'unite' the country.

For these reasons, the heyday of the traditional English-only movement may have passed. Such organizations continue to raise millions each year, to promote their message widely, and to win occasional victories for Official English at the state level. Yet their program seems increasingly irrelevant to the main currents of American politics. As the anti-bilingual education campaign swept through California, US English and English First focused their efforts in Congress, opposing legislation that might have some day created a Spanish-speaking state of Puerto Rico. They played no role whatsoever in the passage of Proposition 227.

Ron Unz neither needed nor wanted help from the established English-only lobbies. With deep pockets of his own, he had no reason to share leadership with these forces in exchange for campaign funding. Privately he expressed disdain for their narrowness and amateurism. Most important, he strived to disassociate English for the Children from their nativist image.

Neoconservative Strategy

For John Tanton (1986), the founder of US English, language restrictionism was a way to organize inchoate resentments about the new diversity. Targeting bilingualism helped to highlight the 'Latin onslaught' and its cultural impact, thereby advancing the cause of immigration restrictionism. For Ron Unz (1994), the assault on bilingual education served a

broader, neoconservative agenda. His ultimate objective was to 'roll back our well-intentioned but failed welfare state' (p. 38) – that is, to dismantle the social programs and civil-rights reforms of the 1960s. Attacking native-language schooling also provided an opportunity to attack some favorite villains of the Right: ivory-tower academics, teachers' unions, civil-rights advocates, ethnic politicians, and of course, the dreaded 'education establishment.' As far as Unz was concerned, this was a campaign that Latinos were welcome to join; indeed, enlisting their support was among his strategic goals.

Following his loss to Pete Wilson in the 1994 Republican primary for governor, Unz warned that certain members of the party (such as his rival) were exploiting nativism for 'momentary political gain.' By ignoring demographic trends, they were 'sacrificing the long-term future of their party – and of America itself' (Unz, 1994: 37). After all, it would be difficult to build a Republican majority while continuing to bash fast-growing minorities in key states. Latinos, for example, are projected to represent two out of five voters in California and Texas by 2025, one out of four in Florida, and one out of five in New York (Balz, 1998). Unz argued that 'most Hispanics are classic blue-collar Reagan Democrats' whose views on social issues like abortion draw them toward conservatism, while Asians are a relatively privileged stratum 'much like Jews. ... but without the liberal guilt.' He portrayed both groups as 'natural constituencies' for Republicans. Thus the party should seek 'to unite rather than divide conservative natives and immigrants' by stressing 'core policies' such as free markets and limited government. Conversely, it should oppose 'divisive' programs like affirmative action and bilingual education in the name of 'individual liberty, community spirit, and personal self-reliance.' In other words, conservatives should be both 'pro-immigrant' and pro-assimilation (Unz, 1994: 35–38). Unz could therefore maintain ideological consistency while:

- actively opposing Proposition 187 in 1994, California's effort to expel 'illegal aliens,' or at least deny them benefits and services, including education for their children;
- actively supporting Proposition 209 in 1996, the state's ban on affirmative action programs, championing 'meritocracy' over the values of diversity and equality; and
- sponsoring Proposition 227 in 1998, a measure that advertised itself as immigrants' ticket to 'the American Dream of economic and social advancement' (English Language in Public Schools, 1998).

Unz's initiative provided the first test of his ideas for conservative coalition-building. Could the fears of English-speakers be assuaged

without alienating too many language minorities? Was opportunity-through-assimilation an idea that could be sold to immigrants and natives alike? Would it be credible to attack bilingual education on behalf of those it was designed to benefit? The results were mixed. Unz fell far short of the 80 to 90 percent support among Latinos that he predicted at the outset of his campaign (Humphrey, 1997). In the June 2 primary election, they opposed the initiative by nearly two to one (Los Angeles Times–CNN Poll, 1998). His dreams of a political realignment in California looked even more outlandish, as ethnic minorities turned out in record numbers to back Democratic candidates in November 1998. It was clear that immigrants and their descendants continued to associate the Republican Party with the nativist elements it had courted in recent years.

Nevertheless, judging by the vote on Proposition 227, Unz's short-term strategy had a wide appeal among Californians. The initiative passed easily, despite a disproportionate turnout of liberal and Democratic voters, who defeated other conservative ballot measures.¹⁶ Ethnic opposition was considerably weaker than it had been against Proposition 187 four years earlier: 37 percent of Latinos and 57 percent of Asians voted for the anti-bilingual initiative (Los Angeles Times–CNN Poll, 1998)¹⁷ versus 23 percent of Latinos and 47 percent of Asians for the anti-immigrant initiative (Los Angeles Times Poll, 1994). In other words, attacking bilingual education did not result in the racial polarization that many had expected.

Evidence is fragmentary on which language-minority voters supported Proposition 227 and why. Opinion polls indicate, however, that its popularity among all voters was closely correlated with economic status. Respondents with annual household incomes over \$60,000 were more than twice as likely to oppose bilingual education as those with incomes below \$20,000 (Pinkerton, 1998). Among Latinos, the vote was close in middle-class communities like Montebello, while the initiative lost by nearly three to one in working-class Huntington Park (Pyle *et al.*, 1998). A poll of Chinese Americans in San Francisco – a less affluent Asian community, where most respondents preferred to be surveyed in Cantonese or Mandarin – found that 73 percent planned to vote no (Chao, 1998). Thus the available data suggest that recent immigrants with children in bilingual education were far more likely to oppose Proposition 227.

It appears that Unz's arguments had more resonance for higher-income, English-proficient Asians and Latinos. Letters to the editor during the campaign provide anecdotal evidence on the attitudes of immigrant professionals. Citing their own experiences, assimilated ethnics argued that being 'forced to join the mainstream' and being

required 'to learn English as quickly as possible' were keys to success in the United States (Sanchez, 1998; Yi, 1998). For many, class tended to take precedence over ethnicity as a prism for viewing the issue. Having limited contact with current programs for English learners, they formed opinions largely on the basis of media accounts. In short, they seemed to approach Proposition 227 not very differently from affluent Anglos. And they rendered the same verdict on bilingual education: guilty as charged. The outcome might have been different, however, if the program's advocates had chosen to mount a defense.

Conceding the Public Debate

By the time the initiative's opponents got organized in November 1997, they were trailing by more than four to one among registered voters (Los Angeles Times Poll, 1997). Ron Unz had been circulating ballot petitions for four months, receiving extensive media coverage and encountering no organized response from the advocates of bilingual education. Failing to answer such attacks was hardly a new phenomenon; nor was it limited to California. Years of inattention to the program's public image had left numerous misconceptions unchallenged. Journalists, echoing the conventional wisdom, were skeptical of research findings favorable to bilingual pedagogies (McQuillan and Tse, 1996). Opinion surveys usually found that the idea of intensive English instruction was popular in immigrant communities. Latino politicians, impressed by the early polls on Proposition 227, were reluctant to speak out against it. Meanwhile, other Democrats expressed impatience with the California Association for Bilingual Education for opposing compromise legislation; these erstwhile allies also remained largely silent about the initiative.¹⁸

Isolated and misunderstood, bilingual educators reached out to allies in California's education, civil-rights, and immigrant advocacy communities, who recognized the extreme nature of Unz's proposal. These forces came together to form Citizens for an Educated America, the official No on 227 organization. With initial funding from the California Association for Bilingual Education and the California Teachers Association, they conducted polls and focus groups while seeking professional advice from political and media consultants.

For No on 227, the immediate task was developing a strategy for the underdog campaign. Based on their analysis of the electorate, the consultants offered the following recommendations:

- In a state of 33 million people, reaching the electorate would mean relying heavily on broadcast media. Because of the expense of advertising – more than \$1 million a week to saturate the major tele-

vision markets – fundraising would have to be a high priority for the No on 227 campaign.

- Traditional supporters of bilingual education – linguistic minorities and progressives – were unlikely to turn out in large enough numbers to defeat Proposition 227. It would also be necessary to win over ‘swing voters’ yet to form a strong opinion. Of these, the most promising demographic sector was determined to be ‘Republican women over 50.’
- A winning message should highlight the initiative’s extreme provisions, rather than challenge the conventional wisdom about the ‘failure’ of bilingual education. Opinion research suggested that, while Unz’s solution could be discredited, there was too little time to change voters’ minds about the problem.
- In short, the consultants advised: ‘*DO NOT* get into a discussion defending bilingual education’ (Citizens, 1998a; emphasis in original).

This last recommendation came as a shock to many bilingual educators and researchers. How could they fail to respond to falsehoods about their profession or stand by silently while ideologues maligned programs that benefitted LEP children? Advocates like Stephen Krashen viewed the Proposition 227 debate as an excellent opportunity to educate the public about second-language acquisition. They also worried that refusing to challenge Unz’s charges would be seen as conceding their validity.

Ultimately, however, the leaders of Citizens and its organizational sponsors accepted the consultants’ advice.¹⁹ They came to believe that not discussing bilingual education offered the best hope of saving it. The ‘Don’t Defend’ strategy was then sold to CAFE members and to bilingual directors throughout the state, who were counseled not to respond to attacks on their programs. Activists, including those working in language-minority communities, were urged to emphasize what was wrong with Proposition 227, not what was right with bilingual education. ‘Put aside your personal feelings,’ they were told, in effect. ‘Trust the professionals to run this campaign.’ Many advocates did so; others worked independently of Citizens.²⁰ Grassroots efforts sprouted throughout the state, but they received limited support or coordination from the campaign apparatus, except for those that involved fundraising (Campbell, 1998).

To represent its views, No on 227 hired spokespersons with no background in bilingual education. Whenever the subject came up in public debates or media interviews, they sought to redirect the discussion, saying:

Bilingual education is *not* on the ballot in June. What is on the ballot is Ron Unz's very specific proposal for California's school children. ... I'll be happy to discuss the merits of different bilingual education programs on June 3 [the day after the election] – assuming the Ron Unz Initiative fails and we can still have a meaningful conversation. (Citizens, 1998b: 1; emphasis in original).

Based on its private polling (Citizens, 1997), the No campaign singled out various features of Proposition 227 for criticism. Initially it stressed provisions that allowed children to be mixed by age and grade for English instruction; restricted special instruction in English to 180 days; and made teachers vulnerable to lawsuits and personal financial penalties for violating the English-only mandate. None of these issues seemed to capture the public's attention.

So, in the campaign's late stages, a new target was selected by the No on 227 forces: the initiative's \$50 million annual appropriation to teach English to adults who would agree to tutor children in the language. Unz had obviously inserted this provision to bolster his 'pro-immigrant' image; using non-native speakers of English with no training in language teaching was hardly the best way to serve LEP students. Nevertheless, this approach resembled the federal Family English Literacy program,²¹ which bilingual educators had long supported. The proposed funding was relatively modest – about one-sixth of one percent of California's education budget – and it addressed a real need. No on 227 determined, however, that diverting funds from K-12 schools to benefit adult immigrants was unpopular with many Californians. So attacking the idea became the centerpiece of its multi-million-dollar advertising blitz (Citizens, 1998c).

This position required an about-face for the coalition opposing Unz. Over the past decade, several of its members had lobbied to remedy the chronic shortage of adult English classes, exposing the hypocrisy of English-only advocates who declined to support additional funding (*see p. 34*). Now it was the No on 227 campaign that appeared hypocritical. Unz (1998) seized upon the issue, accusing his opponents of betraying their own principles out of desperation. It was a difficult claim to deny.

Meanwhile, the news media did not stop reporting on the charges against bilingual education – only effective responses to those charges. Some journalists did seek to balance their accounts with the opinions of bilingual educators and researchers who acted independently of the No campaign. Parents and teachers sought to publicize success stories for bilingual education – two-way programs in particular. Local organizers rallied supporters through demonstrations and candle-light marches. Yet

these individual advocates spoke with many voices, delivering diverse messages. They had little success in discrediting the claims of Ron Unz and his allies, which continued to dominate the news.

No on 227 also failed to focus much attention on the initiative itself, or to generate significant media coverage of any kind. Its attack on the \$50 million adult English provision never became a central issue for voters, except perhaps for anti-immigrant extremists. At the same time, there were principled reasons for Californians who were skeptical about bilingual education to oppose Proposition 227 – notably, its severe restrictions on parental choice and local control in educating English learners. Yet No on 227 never stressed these features of the initiative, which in a different kind of campaign might have been decisive. Had they done so, at least one opinion researcher concludes, ‘the seeds of defeat for Proposition 227 might have been sown’ (Alvarez, 1999). It made no difference that opponents outspent English for the Children by nearly five to one.²² Yes on 227 needed to run little advertising – and no television commercials – because it received such favorable ‘free media’ attention.

Naturally Unz (1998) cited the Don’t Defend strategy as evidence that bilingual education was indefensible. It is hard to fault most Californians for believing him, because few heard the other side. No on 227 began with the premise that voters’ minds were closed to considering the merits of bilingual programs. So, rather than engage them in discussion on the issue, the campaign sought to distract them with diversionary gimmicks. Instead of appealing to their sense of fairness, it pandered to their nativism and parsimony. When the strategy failed, many bilingual educators concluded the electorate was so bigoted that their cause had been hopeless from the start. With this defeatist approach, however, advocates failed to put their hypothesis to any logical test. Whether Californians could have been convinced to support bilingual education – or at least resolve to ‘mend it, don’t end it’ – is impossible to say. No on 227 never tried.

Survival Strategies

The victory of Proposition 227 raises painful but inescapable questions for bilingual educators throughout the United States:

- How long can an unpopular pedagogy be sustained – especially one that depends on public funding and, in some cases, legal mandates for survival?
- Why are the opponents of bilingual education expanding their influence over voters and policymakers?
- What strategies offer hope for changing minds about the program before it is dismantled or restricted?

- Where will the political clout be found – that is, which constituencies will provide the needed support – to block poorly considered ‘reform’ legislation?
- Who will take the lead in organizing to defend bilingual education?

Few advocates for language-minority students in the United States are any better prepared to answer these questions today than their colleagues were in California. Yet the questions are increasingly urgent. Shortly after passage of Proposition 227, the House Republicans pushed through a bill to curtail federal grants for bilingual education, turn the funding over to states, restrict enforcement of civil-rights laws for LEP students, and limit all programs for English learners to two years.²³

Ron Unz soon began to export his anti-bilingual campaign to other states. Some bilingual education advocates – for example, in Arizona and Massachusetts – have responded with serious organizing drives of their own. Yet such efforts remain the exception. Meanwhile, national leadership has been limited. Despite stereotypes to the contrary, many bilingual educators express an aversion to politics. Thus they rarely get around to discussing survival strategies in any systematic way.

What is to be done? One answer is offered by an expert panel of the National Research Council (August and Hakuta, 1997), which argues for *depoliticizing* the discussion of how to serve English learners. It accuses advocates on both sides of polarizing matters by slanting research findings and focusing narrowly on language of instruction, to the exclusion of other variables. Both bilingual and English-only approaches have proved beneficial, the NRC’s review of the literature concludes, so ‘there is little value’ in continuing to debate their relative merits. ‘The key issue is not finding a program that works for all children and all localities, but rather finding a set of program components that works for the children in the community of interest, given that community’s goals, demographics, and resources’ (p. 138). In effect, the report calls for a cease-fire in the political battles over bilingual education, freeing researchers and practitioners to make decisions strictly on their pedagogical merits.

This solution has understandable appeal for professionals who would like to shield their work from politics – and from charges of political influence. It fails, however, to address the reality of politicization: a concerted assault on bilingual education, originating in the English-only movement of the 1980s and intensifying under the leadership of neoconservatives in the 1990s. Ideological rather than pedagogical concerns have driven the opposition, which helps to explain why the policy debate has become so polarized.

Blaming ‘both sides’ for this state of affairs portrays a false symmetry,

to say the least. However stubbornly they may champion their favorite programs, bilingual educators and researchers have no political agenda (hidden or otherwise) to advance outside the schools. Nor do they receive financial support from those who do. Rarely do they make inflammatory statements for the news media or write polemics for mass-circulation magazines. To the extent they have participated in the politics of education, they have almost invariably acted out of professional, not ideological, commitments.

By contrast, the academic critics of bilingual education seem to have few qualms about political activism or close ties to English-only lobbies. The READ Institute, founded by Keith Baker and now directed by Rosalie Porter, has received large grants from US English and its benefactors (Crawford, 1999). Christine Rossell serves, along with Ron Unz, as an adviser to the so-called Center for Equal Opportunity, a group formed by Linda Chávez to combat affirmative action and multiculturalism. This organization sued the Albuquerque Public Schools in 1998 demanding an end to native-language instruction, enlisting Porter and Rossell as 'expert witnesses.' During the Proposition 227 campaign, Rossell launched ad hominem attacks on researchers who support bilingual education as 'opportunists' in pursuit of 'big money.' In a media interview, she stated: 'It is my belief that Krashen and Cummins came up with their theory of language acquisition to justify a practice that was spreading like wildfire through the schools' (Stewart, 1998).²⁴ Like similar charges against individuals – which are meant to discredit the field as a whole – Rossell's politicking went unchallenged by other researchers.

Moreover, the critics enjoy generous support from Right-leaning foundations and political figures seeking to influence public opinion on language-minority education. In 1998 alone, their writings appeared in mass-market publications such as the *Reader's Digest*, *Atlantic Monthly*, *Wall Street Journal*, and *New Republic*, not to mention the *Phi Delta Kappan*. The READ Institute's analysis of the NRC report (Glenn, 1997) was sent to every school superintendent and principal in Massachusetts by John Silber, chair of the state board of education. Rarely are the arguments of bilingual education advocates articulated so widely or so well – outside the pages of academic journals. A less 'politicized' approach would render them virtually invisible.

This is not to say that advocates should make unscientific claims or exaggerate the case for bilingual pedagogies or stoop to character assassination. Nor should they tolerate a single-minded focus on language of instruction, which has made for a simplistic and unproductive debate, as the NRC panel notes (August and Hakuta, 1997). At the same time, however, it is important to recognize that the public's obsession with this

issue is unlikely to subside on its own. The controversy will continue until bilingual education is better understood as an effective means to acquire English – or until it is repudiated, marginalized, and dismantled.

Researchers have a vital role to play in the outcome. If they neglect to publish data on program effectiveness, the political climate will only worsen. If they fail to explain second-language acquisition in an accessible way, the vacuum will be filled by Ron Unz *et al.* If their studies de-emphasize comparisons of bilingual and non-bilingual approaches, as the NRC recommends, policymakers will likely favor the latter, which are more popular and more intuitive to voters. Excessive caution and even-handedness in presenting scientific evidence will surely work to the advantage of partisan critics.

It is understandable that researchers and practitioners would prefer to avoid political distractions. But the reality is that, for professionals in language-minority education today, they are inescapable. To influence decisions that are crucial to LEP students, educators must learn to participate more effectively in the policy debate: not by distorting research evidence or by denouncing their opponents as racists, but by explaining bilingual pedagogies in a credible way – that is, in a *political context* that members of the public can understand and endorse. In the 1960s, that context was the war on poverty; in 1970s, equal educational opportunity. Earlier in our history, it was parents' right to pass on their cultural heritage. Today another rationale might be more appropriate. Whatever the strategy, to be successful it must be determined – very soon – by the field and its supporters. Let the discussion begin.

Notes

1. In addition, June 1998 voters were disproportionately affluent and elderly; nearly half had family incomes exceeding \$60,000 and more than half were at least fifty years of age. By comparison, California's median household income was \$37,009 in 1995; residents over 50 represented approximately one-third of its voting-age population (US Census Bureau, 1998).
2. One provision of Unz's initiative that worried immigration restrictionists was a statement that 'the government and the public schools of California have a moral obligation and a constitutional duty to provide all of California's children, regardless of their ethnicity or national origins, with the skills necessary to become productive members of our society' (English Language in Public Schools, 1998: §300). Nativist groups also objected to a provision appropriating \$500 million over ten years to fund adult English classes (García, 1998).
3. Matta Tuchman won enough votes to force a run-off election and nearly unseated the incumbent, Delaine Eastin, in November 1998.
4. Proponents of systematic phonics instruction have blamed 'whole language' approaches, which began to be adopted in 1987, for a precipitous decline in literacy. McQuillan (1998) has shown, however, that reading scores in California

have remained fairly constant since 1984 – albeit low relative to the rest of the United States.

5. The comprehensive Chacón-Moscone Bilingual-Bicultural Education Act had been allowed to ‘sunset’ in 1987; governors Deukmejian and Wilson vetoed several attempts to extend it. Yet other requirements for native-language instruction, where appropriate to serve English learners, continued to be enforced by the California Department of Education.
6. The bipartisan bill, sponsored by state Senator Dede Alpert, a Democrat, and Assemblyman Brooks Firestone, a Republican, finally passed the legislature – over CABE’s continuing objections – on April 20, 1998. Governor Wilson vetoed the measure, calling it ‘too little, too late,’ and threw his support behind Proposition 227 (Ingram, 1998).
7. In fact, according to the California Department of Education, state categorical funding to defray districts’ expenses in educating English learners totaled \$319 million in 1995–96 – that is, 1.2 percent of K-12 spending statewide, or a supplemental cost of \$241 for each LEP student. About 30 percent of this amount, \$98 million, flowed directly to bilingual classrooms. The federal Title VII program also provided \$55 million and the Title I program an unspecified amount for various programs serving LEP students.
8. An archive of news coverage on the English for the Children website (<http://www.onenation.org/>) includes 675 articles from print media, mostly in California.
9. Stephen Krashen, one of the few bilingual education advocates to be profiled in the press, was the target of an extended and highly personal assault by Stewart (1998).
10. For example, the *Los Angeles Times* embraced Unz’s theme of bilingual education as a vested interest (Anderson and Pyle, 1998). As support, it cited per capita subsidies for LEP students as a disincentive to redesignating them as English-proficient and noted the numerous publishers who exhibited Spanish-language materials at the conference of the California Association for Bilingual Education. More balanced reporting would have uncovered contradictory evidence: First, administrators’ evaluations and promotions in numerous districts, including Los Angeles Unified, are based in part on how *rapidly* they redesignate LEP students (Forrest Ross, LAUSD Language Acquisition and Bilingual Development Branch, personal communication, 5 June 1998). Second, Spanish materials are a ‘loss leader’ for textbook publishers seeking adoption of their English materials. Thus they stood to gain financially from passage of Proposition 227; no large publisher made significant contributions to the No on 227 campaign.
11. Even Unz acknowledged that the ‘95 percent failure rate’ was based on shaky statistics. But he found the sound-bite too effective to abandon. Challenged on this point at a legislative hearing, he said: ‘I have no claim that the numbers are realistic or accurate. ... But they are the only numbers available, and I have to work with them’ (Anderson, 1997).
12. The study was published by the National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education rather than a peer-reviewed journal. Collier maintained that it had ‘reported [data] exactly as expected in this type of study, similar to other evaluation research studies conducted at the federal level. ... Replication of our research by other researchers is the quickest path to widespread acceptance of our results’ (personal communication, 22 March 1998).

13. Immediately after the election, the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Multicultural Education, Training and Advocacy, Inc., the American Civil Liberties Union and other advocates filed suit to block the initiative statute on civil-rights and constitutional grounds. A federal district judge in San Francisco declined, however, to order a preliminary injunction. While the lawsuit continued, Proposition 227 took effect as scheduled on August 2, 1998, sixty days after the vote.
14. The first Los Angeles Times Poll (1997), which proved highly influential in the campaign, failed to mention the initiative's restrictive provisions. It posed the following question:

There is a new initiative trying to qualify for the June primary ballot that would require all public school instruction to be conducted in English and for students not fluent in English to be placed in a short-term English immersion program. If the June 1998 primary election were being held today, would you vote for or against this measure?

When Proposition 227 was described in more detail, responses differed dramatically. Krashen *et al.* (1998) conducted a comparative poll, using a modified question:

There is a new initiative trying to qualify for the June primary ballot that would severely restrict the use of the child's native language in school. This initiative would limit special help in English to one year (180 school days). After this time, limited-English proficient children would be expected to know enough English to do school work at the same level as native speakers of English their age. The initiative would dismantle many current programs that have been demonstrated to be successful in helping children acquire English, and would hold teachers financially responsible if they violate this policy. If passed, schools would have 60 days to conform to the new policy. If the June, 1998 primary election were being held today, would you vote for or against this policy?

When asked the Los Angeles Times Poll question, 57 percent of respondents supported Proposition 227; when asked the modified question, only 15 percent did so.
15. An exception is English First, a more radical group, which did target the Bilingual Education Act for elimination in some versions of Official English legislation. Yet its influence has been limited to extreme right-wing factions in Congress.
16. For example, voters turned thumbs down on Proposition 226, which would have limited unions' ability to spend their members' dues on political campaigns. In exit polls, 48 percent of voters identified themselves as Democrats and 20 percent as liberals – versus 40 percent and 17 percent, respectively, in the November 1994 election when Proposition 187 was adopted (Los Angeles Times Poll, 1994, 1998).
17. The 'black xenophobia' Unz (1994) had warned about failed to materialize, as African-Americans voted against Proposition 227, 48 to 52 percent. Non-Hispanic whites voted in favor, 67 to 33 percent (Los Angeles Times–CNN Poll, 1998).
18. Mike Honda, a Japanese American member of the California Assembly from San Jose, was the only notable exception.
19. Like most campaigns, Citizens was neither a formal coalition nor a membership organization; there was no structure for democratic decision-making or

regular communication with volunteers. The No on 227 steering committee was beholden to its sponsoring groups, in particular those supplying the financial resources. Day-to-day operations were delegated to Richie Ross, a Sacramento-based political consultant.

20. The author belonged to the latter camp, helping to organize an effort to influence media coverage known as UnzWatch.
21. This program was funded through the Bilingual Education Act from 1984 to 1994.
22. Citizens for an Educated America raised and spent \$4,754,157. English for the Children raised \$1,289,815 but spent only \$976,632. Ron Unz personally contributed \$752,738 (California Secretary of State, 1998).
23. H.R. 3892, sponsored by Frank Riggs, a California Republican, passed the House on a party-line vote of 221 to 189. It never came to a vote in the Senate during the 105th Congress.
24. Rossell is no stranger to the 'big money' herself. In 1988, when the Berkeley (CA) Unified School District was sued by parents demanding stronger bilingual programs, Rossell served as an expert witness for the defense. She took home \$129,049 in fees and expenses for her consulting work. Baker and Porter were paid \$40,950 and \$12,937, respectively (BUSD associate superintendent Anton Jungherr, personal communication, 17 April 1990).

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