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Edited by Kenji Hakuta and Lucinda Pease-Alvarez

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# Enriching Our Views of Bilingualism and Bilingual Education

LUCINDA PEASE-ALVAREZ

KENJI HAKUTA

The articles for this special issue are introduced. Collectively, they underscore the need to enrich the research perspective on bilingual education by acknowledging its full range of complexities, including the politics, practices, values, and expectations regarding language-minority students. The authors argue for the importance of basic research on bilingualism, of case studies of practice, and of taking into account the reality of practitioners and the ideology that guides work with this population of students.

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his issue of the Educational Researcher is devoted to research on bilingual education. The traditional view of this research area, particularly from a policy perspective, has concentrated on program evaluation, such as the recently completed longitudinal comparison of three types of instructional strategies that drew national attention (Ramirez, Yuen, Ramey, & Pasta, 1990). Without denying the importance of efforts to improve the quality of such summative program evaluation efforts, in this special issue, we would like to step back and ask more fundamental questions: What is the nature of the goals of bilingual education programs and their evaluation? Are these goals consistent with more general theories about bilingualism, such as our understanding about second-language learning and about the role of communities in schooling? What should the direction of future research in this area be?

Without doubt, the ability of the education community to meet the exciting challenges of the increasing linguistic and ethnic diversity of students will continue to be the subject of much scrutiny (see, e.g., Olsen & Mullen, 1990, and McCarty First & Wilshire Carrera, 1988). We hope to demonstrate that the broader perspectives such as those provided in this issue are critical in going beyond what we consider to be the sterile and unimaginative offerings of the summative evaluation efforts.

We start by asking Mary McGroarty to characterize the societal forces that have framed the debate surrounding bilingual education. This perspective allows us to understand the political processes involved in making bilingual education programs controversial and sets the stage for Gary Cziko's discussion of evaluation research in this area. The value of Cziko's contribution is his ability to sample a range of evaluation studies and to demonstrate their difficulty in focusing on the goals of the programs. Although much of his argument may apply to standard program evaluation methodology, the ideas crystallize in bilingual education evaluation because of the murkiness in policy direction in this area.

Catherine Snow provides an important link between the concerns of bilingual education and basic research in secondlanguage acquisition. We considered this contribution valuable for several reasons. First, second-language acquisition is a centrally important developmental process for students in bilingual programs. Second, this area of research is often ill understood and considered eccentric if not mysterious to outsiders, and so a bird's-eye view was considered appropriate. And third, we believe that the sorts of linkages between basic theory in language acquisition and bilingual education practice could serve as an exemplar for what is possible. Like Cziko, Snow discusses the problems associated with a research area that has been dominated by a single perspective, but she is optimistic that a broader theory is not far in the future. Indeed, we believe that this is one clear instance where the relationship is symbiotic, where the practical problems of second-language acquisition as confronted by educational researchers will end up contributing to advances in basic theory.

Finally, the article by Luis Moll represents a community-school researcher's perspective. He extends the messages of the other authors by describing how a sociocultural perspective can redirect our research efforts away from questions and issues that assume a deficit view of language-minority students. The ethnographic work he describes shows how students' cultural resources are utilized in creating instructional opportunities that enhance students' academic and intellectual development rather than remediating so-called linguistic inadequacies. Unlike other research traditions, this work emphasizes the role that context and researcher/teacher collaboration play in bringing about change in schools.

From our vantage point these articles help articulate several interrelated viewpoints from which we evaluate research in bilingual education. First, the social and political forces that shape opinions about bilingual education represent an important backdrop for understanding research, and we as researchers are therefore obligated to systematically monitor these factors. We are, after all, members of a society that holds strong opinions about the subject matter. Second, the considerable amount of research that exists is irrelevant (and irreverent) to the perspectives of teachers and other practi-

LUCINDA PEASE-ALVAREZ is assistant professor, Board of Studies in Education, University of California, Santa Cruz, CA 95064. Her specialty is language and literacy development of language-minority children. Kenji Hakuta is professor of education, Stanford University, Stanford, CA 94305. He specializes in the areas of bilingualism and second-language acquisition.

tioners. Third, the dominant signature on bilingual education research is an assimilationist orientation toward language, culture, and learning, and one that most commonly emphasizes and expects failure. And fourth, we hope to encourage a research perspective that values the linguistic and cultural backgrounds of language-minority students. In the rest of this article, we will draw upon our own views and those of the other contributors as we elaborate on these themes and offer recommendations for future research.

# The Importance of the Societal Context

Since the passage of the Bilingual Education Act in 1968, bilingual education has been surrounded by controversy and debate. It has come to symbolize different things to different people. As McGroarty argues, definitions and views of bilingual education are often shaped by a variety of social and political factors rather than by substantive consideration of what goes on programmatically.

A juxtaposition of two different positions conveyed in two popular books on bilingual education provides an example of extreme responses to this educational reform. In her recent book, Forked Tongue (1990), Rosalie Porter purports to offer a pragmatic, liberating view of bilingual education that offsets the extreme opinions of right-wing conservatives and left-wing social justice advocates. Porter is critical of what she feels are the ultimate goals of bilingual education: the preservation of minority language and culture, balanced bilingualism at a societal level, and the political advancement of Latinos. Porter's position on schooling favors upholding what she perceives to be the linguistic and cultural status quo. Since stable bilingualism has not been part of our national experience and consequently is not, as Porter puts it, an "American option," why should schools waste valuable time on this "ephemeral goal." To do so only "distracts us from addressing the fundamental need for good schooling that produces competency in the language, which, in turn, will empower language minority students in school and work—in the here and now, and not in some future utopia" (p. 207). As this quote indicates, Porter believes that the real goal of education for language-minority children should be their social and economic advancement in mainstream society, not the preservation of their native languages and cultures. To do both, according to Porter, is an impossible and inappropriate task for schools.

In Empowering Minority Students (1989), Jim Cummins advocates bilingual programs that enable language-minority students "to feel a sense of efficacy and control over what they are committed to doing in the classroom and in their lives outside the school." Cummins argues that the failure that so many children experience in school is due not to a language deficit but because the kind of "disempowerment" that prevails in their communities also occurs in children's schools. The patterns of interactions and pedagogical practices that prevail in schools, even those with transitional bilingual programs, succeed only in preserving a system that has "disempowered" minority students and their families. In contrast to Porter, he argues for a form of bilingual/bicultural education that will ultimately enable languageminority students to take control over their own lives. The instructional approach that Cummins advocates builds on an additive view of bilingualism and biculturalism. As he puts it, "Educators who see their role as adding a second language and cultural affiliation to students' repertoires are likely to empower students more than those who see their role as replacing or subtracting students' primary language and culture in the process of assimilating them to the dominant culture" (p. 60).

These two authors hold widely divergent views on the roles of language, culture, power, and schooling in the United States. From the standpoint of Porter's assimilationist perspective, schools empower minority students by providing them with the tools to enter the American mainstream: the English language and access to the mainstream curriculum. Once acquired, these tools enable students to attain economic and social advancement. For Cummins, social transformation should be the ultimate goal of schooling and

Don't worry about English; they are all learning it; instead, if you are going to worry, worry about the lost potential in the attrition of the native language.

may be attained through a model of bilingual/bicultural education that recognizes the cultural and linguistic resources of minority students. The use and development of minority students' native languages is an essential feature of this model.

# Assimilationist Perspectives

Not surprisingly, the ideological extremes described here are mirrored in research. Porter's assimilationist perspective is reflected in the assumptions that underlie evaluation research on bilingual programs and are, as Moll and Cziko argue, particularly apparent in the questions and issues that motivate this research tradition. Most evaluation studies focus on students' performances on tests of basic skills and English. The quality of instruction is largely ignored or reported as fitting one of a limited set of program models (e.g., early-exit, late-exit, immersion). Thus, evaluation research tends to portray bilingual education programs in standardized ways with English language and basic skills acquisition as central goals. Relatively few evaluation studies report on students' native-language abilities. Even the study by Ramirez et al. (1990), which is arguably the most detailed and methodologically rigorous bilingual evaluation study conducted to date, includes no analysis of the data that were collected on the students' native-language abilities.

Moll argues that the obsession with English and assimilation into the mainstream curriculum reflects a deficit view of language-minority children and their families. Because children and their families are seen as not interested in learning English, English-language acquisition is viewed as the single most important educational goal for this student group. Moreover, the relative absence of research focusing on the abilities and experiences minority students bring to the classroom may be taken as evidence that researchers consider these experiences and abilities to be at worst inadequate, at best irrelevant.

# Linguistic and Cultural Resource Perspectives

The theoretical perspective of recent research relevant to the education of language-minority children reflects what Ruiz (1990) calls a resource perspective. This body of research focuses on the positive side of being bilingual and living in an ethnic-minority community and includes basic research on bilingualism and second-language acquisition. For example, a sizable literature on the cognitive functioning of bilingual children suggests that bilingualism may promote cognitive growth (Diaz, 1983). However, some of these advantages of bilingualism may be available only when children maintain their bilingualism and do not lose their home language as they acquire their school language.

A growing body of ethnographic research focuses on the everyday lives of bilingual children, their families, and their communities. Much of this research emphasizes children's abilities and how these abilities are linked to experiences in the children's homes and communities. As Moll explains, this research perspective has been influenced by an expanded definition of learning and cognition as a situated activity embedded in a social, cultural, and physical context. As Brown, Collins, and Duguid (1989) argue, enculturation—the process of observing and practicing the behavior of members of a culture—is the way children learn that behavior outside of school. Consequently, to understand how children learn a particular behavior in the context of the everyday experiences in which it is embedded.

# **Future Perspectives**

Our vision for research in bilingual education builds upon many of the points made here. First, we continue to argue that basic research is an effective way of helping educators and policymakers construct a vision of desirable outcomes and methods of getting there. Although summative program evaluations may appear to be the most direct route toward this goal, the practical and political obstacles in this line of research are difficult to overcome. The most useful kinds of basic research help educators maintain their focus on students and practitioners and serve to put language politics into perspective. For example, it is the politics that fuels the view that students are not learning English and are hanging on to their native language—this misplaced vision is what fuels much of the evaluation efforts. Basic research shows that students are acquiring English within 2 to 7 years (Collier, 1987), that they and their parents place a high value on both English and their ethnic heritage language (Taylor and Lambert, 1990), and yet that typically within two generations, even a language as demographically powerful as Spanish is virtually lost (Veltman, 1988; Hakuta & D'Andrea, in press). Indeed, if the vision constructed by basic research were to be stated in its boldest form, it is as follows: Don't worry about English; they are all learning it; instead, worry about the instructional content; if you are going to worry about language, worry about the lost potential in the attrition of the native language, for all of the languages of the world are represented in this country.

Second, in addition to basic theory, we see advantages in conducting case studies that provide detailed portraits of par-

ticular programs, classrooms, teachers, students, and their communities. Cases, we believe, are most useful when they focus on successes or on the unusual in bilingual education. We know of case studies of innovative teachers and instructional leaders that have inspired change in others. Similarly, case-study descriptions of two-way bilingual programs provide food for thought for educators who have a maintenance orientation toward bilingualism. A more ambitious attempt at using cases can be found in the recent efforts of the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation at the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), which has coordinated 27 case studies of innovative programs for language-minority students in 11 countries.

Because findings from these case studies are not immediately generalizable to other settings and circumstances, practitioners reading these accounts are responsible for assessing their relevance. Occasions like a recent OECD-sponsored conference in Australia that brought together the researchers and educators who participated in the case studies represent a special opportunity for seeking out commonalities across cases in a variety of settings.

Third, like most social science research, neither basic research on bilingualism nor educational case studies adequately address the day-to-day reality of teachers and students who work in bilingual programs. Attempts to make research relevant to teachers and students include inquirybased approaches to instruction that involve teachers and students in the process of investigating teaching and learning both in and out of schools. Another approach entails reconceptualizing and combining the processes of researching and teaching. According to Atkin (1991), the practical knowledge that teachers draw upon to guide their action needs to be made more explicit by making what goes on in their classrooms the focus of their immediate inquiry. Atkin advocates an approach that brings teachers together to investigate their own practice by reflecting on it, critiquing it, and acting upon it. Instead of yielding generalizable claims that interest social scientists, it leads to what Atkin calls principled action. Although we have observed and even been part of meetings where bilingual teachers have informally engaged in the kind of dialogue that resembles what Atkin describes, we have little documentation on the specifics of this activity, the insights it yields, and the degree to which it is sustained over time.

Finally, we urge the "doers" and the readers of research to carefully consider the ideological perspective that guides their work with language-minority students. As the contributors to this issue argue, research grounded in an assimilationist and deficit perspective leaves us with a simplistic view on how to improve the educational experiences of these students: English-only or English-mostly instruction that emphasizes basic skills. Once researchers and practitioners acknowledge the abilities of working class bilingual children and the experiences that have shaped those abilities, they are in a better position to investigate and act on what is possible in bilingual education, rather than on what has become commonplace.

#### Note

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tions in this issue, research on evaluation of bilingual programs has been carried out largely from a foreign-language perspective, with some recent influence of the developmental model. The crucial insights of the sociocultural perspective have been missing and must be introduced if we are to have adequate assessments of bilingual individuals or evaluation of bilingual programs.

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