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Re-evaluating Bilingual Education Within the U.S. Public Education System

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Re-evaluating Bilingual Education
within the U.S. Public Education System

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ARTS

Professor Martha Gonzalez
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“Who is to say that robbing a people of its
language is less violent than war?”

-Ray Gwyn Smith¹

¹ Ray Gwyn Smith, *Moorland is Cold Country*, unpublished book; cited in Gloria Anzaldúa's book *Borderlands La Frontera*

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Introduction

Being bilingual is not always praised within the United States. However, Being bilingual has given me the opportunity to interact with different cultures, traditions, casual and professional conversations, and other fruitful social experiences. As a native Spanish speaker, I was fortunate to have had two Spanish-speaking parents that were able to teach my siblings and I how to speak, read, and write the language via the everyday living of Mexican culture and household. This journey was not easy given that neither of my parents received any formal education let alone any teaching skills that would facilitate “teaching us” what would be our first language. As first-generation Americans, it was very easy for my siblings and me to assimilate into the American culture especially as we attended public school and were required to learn English quickly. Knowing that we would learn English at school and through television that included cartoons and other programs, my parents were adamant that my siblings and I only spoke Spanish at home and reserve English at school. Although we refused many times to communicate with them in Spanish, I now acknowledge the great service my parents imparted to us. While I did not receive any formal Spanish instruction in elementary school, my mother did seek Spanish catechism classes at our church. I would spend four years of my early childhood reading, writing, and engaging in biblical analysis solely in the Spanish language. I was given homework and was expected to complete it to the best of my abilities. Even though this was not a formal Spanish class, it did allow me to put into formal practice the informal knowledge that I had received from my parents.

The American public education system has come a long way since its formation but it still lacks opportunities for students to learn various languages from a young age. The United

States has attempted to enforce a national curriculum that would ensure equal access to quality programming that focuses on core subjects (Math, English, Science, History, etc). While this has been beneficial for lower income neighborhoods that are often times under- resourced, there still exists a wide margin of opportunities that are not equally accessible to all students. This is because in the United States, each state has autonomy to design its own language curriculum and any derivative programs that are initiated through local districts. Bilingual education is one of the programs that is limited to certain populations of students as a result of state and district interest, funding, need and access.

During my early years of public school education in Ontario, California, I was interested in the dual language immersion programs that were offered at my schools. However, my parents nor I knew how to access these programs, a common narrative among immigrant parents that lacked the knowledge of navigating enrollment into such programs. As a result, it was not until high school that I was given the opportunity to take a formal language class because general education language requirements were expected of those seeking to earn their high school diploma. Given that I had learned Spanish while growing up, I decided that I wanted to learn a new language. I was given the opportunity to choose from Latin, Spanish, and French and ultimately decided on learning the French language and its culture. This experience was rather exciting as I was presented with a new language and francophone cultures that otherwise would have never even crossed my mind. I was quickly able to learn a lot of vocabulary as well as grammar which made my experience of learning a new language a lot more enjoyable. Unfortunately this was not a shared experience with some of my peers. Being fluent in Spanish which, like French, is considered a Romance language, made it significantly

easier for me to learn this new language. My monolingual counterparts had to spend extra hours studying just to understand what I believed were simple grammatical concepts. My journey to becoming trilingual began with great ease, however, as I was presented with more complex grammatical frameworks and as I grew older, acquiring and retaining the information became a lot more difficult. I was no longer able to recall vocabulary, verb tenses, nor appropriately apply my Spanish language knowledge to my French learning. At the age of twenty-one, learning a new language was no longer intuitive which became very frustrating and quite discouraging to me.

As an aspiring elementary school teacher, I have spent a great amount of time in classrooms observing and teaching Spanish and English to different students. I began navigating bilingual education as an educator in 2016 when I taught Spanish and hispanophone cultures to a classroom of sixth graders. I was not shocked that my students knew little or no Spanish, given that they had never had a formal Spanish education but was quickly mesmerized by how quickly they grasped onto everything that I taught them. They became curious and eager to learn more as they inquired about things that were not originally in the lesson plans. This experience encouraged me to seek a teaching position when I studied abroad in Madrid, Spain during the second semester of my sophomore year at Scripps College. There I was placed into two first grade classes and taught formal English classes. I was mesmerized by their ability to express likes and dislikes as well as other short phrased sentences. My first grade students were able to retain even more information than my fifth graders had and were on route to becoming bilingual students. This motivated me to analyze the United States' public education system and

made me question why it did not promote bilingualism as much as other countries overseas do given the great diversity that exists within the US.

Learning a language is a lot easier for young children before they reach adolescence because their brains are more receptive to the loads of information that are taken in as brains develop. As the saying goes "children's brains are like sponges, because they absorb so much." This saying holds true when it comes to learning different languages and schools should therefore provide the proper and equitable opportunities for all students to become bilingual or multilingual. This is an emphasis that needs to be more prevalent within the United States especially as it has become a true melting pot. Since 1960, the United States has become the country with the most immigrants residing within it. According to the Current Population Survey, in 2017, over 86.4 million immigrants and their U.S.-born children lived in the U.S.. In total, there exist fifteen widely spoken languages that are rarely taught in primary school and that eventually become forgotten by some as English is prioritized within schools. English has been a dominant language within the United States and is the most prevalent form of instruction within our public and private education systems. Although it is important that students learn English as well, favoring this language over the fifteen commonly spoken by the current U.S. population has resulted in a detrimental othering of those who are Limited English Proficient² speakers.

The public school education system in the United States has previously created and voted in favor of legislative policies and laws that have tried to promote bilingual education

²"Limited English Proficient" refers to persons ages 5 and older who reported speaking English "not at all," "not well," or "well" on their survey questionnaire. (Hallock et al.)

within some states. These efforts, however, have not resulted in the most effective ways of approaching bilingual education because they have generated xenophobic sentiments as educational hegemony in the United States normalizes Anglo-Saxon traditions. Bilingual education has faced a lot of opposition because there exists a “popular image of the United States as a monolingual culture dominated by the English language and White Anglo-Saxon traditions” (Ovando, 1). This is a problematic assumption to base an opposition to having a wide knowledge of linguistic capital because it sets a language and culture before others which then leads to discrimination and the erasure of masses. Ovando further states, “increasing fear about the importation of foreign ideologies into the United States resulted in a call for all immigrants to be assimilated into one cultural and linguistic mold” (5). A mold is what the United States promotes throughout our schools, in which everyone speaks the same language, holds the same values, shares similar backgrounds, creates uniformity, and produces common knowledge. Unfortunately, molds like these prevent our youth from being exposed to worldly experiences and knowledge that goes beyond our enclosed borders. It is these kinds of molds that foster xenophobic and hypocritical mindsets in which we believe that American democracy is founded on a superior culture, language, and race. One in which as a capitalist country, we pride ourselves in globalization but can’t communicate with others unless they initiate conversations in English. The concept of assimilating into cultural and linguistic molds promotes the idea that more knowledge is not acceptable if not understood by the elite culture. Paulo Freire argues that “cultural invasion is on the one hand an *instrument* of domination, and on the other, the *result* of domination” (Freire 154). This is definitely the case for the United States as power and privilege are given to those who have advanced levels of English proficiency while

immigrant students or those who have lower levels of English proficiency are tracked and placed into specialized classes or programs that immerse them into the new language and culture.

The political origins of public school education in the United States have shaped the way that it has attempted to instill nationalistic pride into our youth and has been dismissive of those who have immigrated into the U.S.. In this essay, I hope to outline major events that have helped the U.S public education system evolve into what it is today. Ovando states, “language ideology in the United States has shifted according to changing historical events” (Ovando, 1). With this in mind, I will analyze the evolution of bilingual education and policies that have been passed and incorporated within the Californian public education system given that California is one of the U.S. states with the largest immigrant population. I will also address the importance that bilingualism holds within literature, individuals, and our nation as a whole and argue why it is important to offer and implement bilingual education programs to our educational curriculum.

Chapter 1: Nativism as Policy: The Origins of Public Education in the US

Public education in the United States was formed with specific goals intended to improve the well-being of the newly conquered land and those who would rule it. In 1635, a few years after the first American colonies were formed, educational values were highly dominated by the Puritans who had fled England as a result of religious persecution (Sass, "American Educational History: A Hypertext Timeline" 2004). The first formalized school was the Latin Grammar School which later came to be known as the Boston Latin School. These schools were designed for sons of the "elite" whose curriculum included leadership skills. Students attending were destined to take up positions in the church, state, or courts and therefore needed to acquire the proper knowledge base to be able to assume these roles. It was very important that these leaders had stream lined common knowledge so they could then develop the colonized land into towns, cities, and eventually states. Creating an education system that would prepare this elite group of youth with nationalist ideologies of the time was the foreseen strategy. As Sarramona-Lopez states "in the field of education, one of the possible points of union are the basic competencies that prepare pupils for their present life and for the immediate future and are directed at all pupils in a country or group of countries" (467). This idea ensured that all those who could afford to attend school, would be equally prepared to navigate the rapid expansion of knowledge that was first envisioned by the Enlightenment. With the rise of academic expansion, came the adoption of a common language. Although classical language studies were offered for those interested, English was the predominant language within the rapidly growing educational system and helped facilitate the transmission of pre-nationalist ideals as it became the common language amongst the elite.

The Enlightenment influenced the development of the education system in New England. The impact of social and economic changes on education included growth in population which caused the colonies to outgrow their economic source of local farming and fishing and in turn created new requirements for education. According to Webb, “the growth in trade and commerce placed new demands on education” (Webb, 89). Indeed, there was an increasing demand for ship navigators, accountants, surveyors of land, and even the polite society. The classical curriculum of the Latin Grammar Schools was not equipped to prepare its students for these tasks and the education system therefore experienced a need for alternative development in order to better prepare its students. This resulted in the creation of English Schools³ which included a two-track system that would advance the academic studies of the elite while promoting mechanical work for the poor. These ideals and goals of the curriculum included “practical education to prepare the craftsman, businessmen and farmers needed in the colonies” (Webb, 90). This curriculum expansion was also followed by a proposal in which instruction would be given in the English language rather than Latin. This change in medium proposed that English would be greatly accepted as the language of the educated, giving it prevalence over all other languages including the diverse indigenous languages that existed before the settlers and colonization of the land. Despite the pre-existing rich, cultural and linguistic foundations, the U.S. founders envisioned “a country with a unified history, with unified traditions, and with a common language” (Hechinger, 130). The early recognition of the English language as the primary academic language set a precedent for “international relations

³ Although they weren't permanent they served as a transition from grammar schools to the academy proposed by Thomas Jefferson in 1747.

particularly in relations between geographically distant peoples” (Lopez, 470). Acceptance of English in school curricula resulted in the elitist dominance in various fields which included but were not limited to academic, linguistic, social, and economical opportunities. Franklin’s suggestion for the two-track educational system in 1779 aligned with his previous suggestions of practical learning but also suggested that the tracks should focus on differentiating “the laboring and the learned” peoples thus, further promoting a gap between the elite and the working-class (Sass, “American Educational History: A Hypertext Timeline”). Education in the early 1800s was very limited for those that belonged to the working class. Not only were there large teacher shortages but students also “skipped school for long periods of time to tend crops and take care of other family duties, and often learned little” (Blakemore 2018).

While the American education system continued to expand, new economic demands and the growth of labor markets produced an increase in the arrival of immigrants into the United States between 1880 and 1920. The increase in immigrant workers compromised the social construction that the colonies, now states, had established during the colonial migration in the 17th century. As education scholar Jaume Sarramona Lopez states, “In the name of a certain kind of nationalism, not only has there been xenophobia, discrimination and injustice, but even the annihilation of those who were considered different” (Lopez, 268). The Americanized hegemony of the early education system also led to racial discrimination that continues to uphold today. Not only did early practices prevent students from receiving equal educational opportunities, it is evident even then that some traits were praised over others, reinforcing the social class system that had been set in place by the early elite. The peak year for admission of new immigrants was 1907, when approximately 1.3 million people entered the

country legally. The rapid diversification of the United States left pre-existing social constructions unsettled. In response, the Immigration Act of 1924 was passed. It “created a quota system that restricted entry to 2 percent of the total number of people of each nationality in America as of the 1890 national census—a system that favored immigrants from Western Europe—and prohibited immigrants from Asia” (Editors 2009).

These practices persist in law well into the 1960’s. President Lyndon Johnson⁴ for example, signed the Immigration Act of 1965 which later became known as the Hart-Cellar Act. This was an important piece of legislation for the education system because it abolished the ‘National Origins Formula’⁵ which resulted in the immigration of a large number of Asians and Latin Americans. This of course began the racial diversification of America’s classrooms. As expected, those who opposed this legislation feared that “it was... polluting the nation's bloodstream” (Kammer, Center for Immigration Studies). These sentiments were undoubtedly manifested within the classrooms via teachers and neighbors. Various states strove to segregate schools in order to maintain the ‘purity’ of their polite society. “By 1923, the legislatures of 34 states had dictated English-only instruction in all private and public primary schools” (Kloss 1977). Fast forward to 1974, yet another piece of legislation was passed. This time it was the Equal Educational Opportunities Act that prohibited the discrimination of any student in the classroom. Schools were required to take action to overcome barriers that could

⁴ President Johnson’s administration had a large impact in public education system. This is something that I will further outline in the coming chapters.

⁵ An American system of immigration quotas, used between 1921 and 1965, which restricted immigration on the basis of existing proportions of the population. It aimed to reduce the overall number of unskilled immigrants (especially from Southern Europe, Eastern Europe and Asia), to allow families to reunite, and to prevent immigration from changing the ethnic distribution of the largely Protestant Northwestern European-descended United States population.

prevent equal protection as well as access to all students. This legislative act was particularly important in “protecting the rights of students with limited English proficiency” (Sass, “American Educational History: A Hypertext Timeline” 2014). Given that the English language had been given priority within the existing education system, this was yet another break from American tradition that spurred resistance and fright.

For as long as the American education system had existed, Latin and English had been the dominant languages and were now being compromised from being the sole languages of importance. As eastern, western, and northern Europeans settled within the United States and were integrated into the education system, they brought their cultures, traditions, and languages as they sought religious freedom and economic opportunities. These “large numbers of immigrant communities formed enclaves and aggressively promoted their language, religion, and cultural loyalties—what Havighurst (1978) has called Defensive Pluralism. These new racial groups believed that it was feasible to maintain their ancestral ways of life while concurrently participating in the civil life of the nation” (Ovando, 4). This, however, was met with opposition of course, as the nationalistic sentiments fostered by the education system resulted in the genocide of whole communities⁶. Creating and promoting inferior and superior cultures, languages, traditions, ideologies, etc. resulted in the erasure and suffering of many early immigrant communities and solidified the formation of a strong imperialistic country.

Schools therefore become important platforms for Anglo-Americans to push homogeneity within the country. This was most prominent after the US involvement in World

⁶ New arrivals were seen as unwanted competition for jobs. Catholics (Irish) experienced discrimination for their religious beliefs. Many new arrivals also faced indentured servitude as it was a way that guaranteed escaping adversities within their home countries. (Editors 2009)

War I and World War II. America was desperate to maintain the national pride and unity needed in order to continue support for the Wars. "It is no doubt that for the Anglo Americans, school systems became the tool for assimilation" (Webb, 97). It became the space in which American values would be taught, fostered, and revived when needed. As a result and during this time, Americanization schools were developed in order to educate and prepare immigrants that hoped to form part of the United States. It is important to acknowledge that in many cases the immigrants being welcomed into schools were those who derived from European descent as opposed to immigrants of color. Nonetheless, assimilation from both counterparts was required or otherwise heavily imposed. Carlos Ovando, a distinguished International Comparative Education professor, states "the predominant approach to educating language-minority students in the United States... was the sink-or-swim method, also known as submersion. In this climate was set for what would come. Most educators and policy makers felt that it was up to the language-minority students, not the schools, to make the linguistic, cultural, and cognitive adjustments necessary to achieve assimilation into American society" (6). The lack of support for students entering public schools was unjustifiable. While students of higher social classes received support when not performing well academically, those who identified with non-English descent were considered incapable of learning. Their culture and language, were the first to be blamed instead of evaluating the effectiveness of the instruction being provided. It is evident that the incorporation of minority immigrants as well as those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, was a situation that the public education system in the U.S. was not ready or willing to accept. As a result, the U.S. did everything possible to manipulate the future of public education in order to ensure that only American values, language and

beliefs were encouraged throughout the nation's schools. Enforcing a common language within schools was one of the many ways that public education began to address perceived threats to the anti-American behaviors. Sustaining cultural pluralism as well as multilingualism within classrooms has the ability to create a positive social transformation among young, developing students which is something that to this day, has failed to be incorporated when addressing the importance of bilingual education for all students regardless of their English proficiency levels.

According to Paris & Alim, two prominent educators and researchers, as long as the educational system has existed, its purpose has been to "forward the largely assimilationist and often violent White imperial project, with students and families being asked to lose or deny their languages, literacies, cultures, and histories in order to achieve in schools" (Paris & Alim, 3). However we must consider that, "If a people loses its own language, it loses with it its most singular sign of identity" (Lopez, 471).

Chapter 2: Erasure Through Assimilation

Language and cultural assimilation have been understood as prerequisites for socioeconomic and social mobility as well as the successful achievement of the “American dream” for many immigrant communities. “I want you to speak English. *Pa’ hallar buen trabajo tienes que saber hablar el inglés bien. Qué vale toda tu educación si todavía hablas inglés con un ‘accent’*” (Anzaldúa, 76).” As the notable Chicana feminist cultural theorist Gloria Anzaldúa recounts, her mother was adamant that her daughter learn English without an accent in order to find a decent job. In this way, the United States has promoted cultural assimilation as the only way to prosper within a larger corporate framework. Indeed education scholar, Stacey Lee has stated how, “cultural assimilation has been assumed to be in the best interest of immigrant groups and the larger society, public schools have long been charged with ‘Americanizing’ immigrant students” (Lee, 8). As European migration brought large demographic changes in the early 1900s, ideals of assimilation were heavily imposed, however, they were later challenged in the 1970’s? through important social activism and a growing belief that bilingualism was a proactive way to assist students within the classrooms. The Naturalization Act of 1906 stipulated that “to become naturalized U.S. citizens, immigrants must be able to speak English. The new immigrants arriving in the largest numbers at the time came from Southern, Eastern, and Central Europe” (Ovando, 5). The large influx of immigrants heightened nativist anxiety and began a growing opposition to any cultural element that was deemed foreign. Formal exclusion acts began to surface as well as a first barrier for immigrants to be able to be recognized as naturalized citizens.

Shortly after the Naturalization Act of 1906 was passed, the US found itself in a time of war. World War was a trying time that left the U.S. in turmoil. The existing education system was largely impacted due to “the resulting anti-German hostility [that] caused the United States to push for monolingualism, and the teaching of German as a foreign language was eliminated in most school districts because pro-melting pot ideologies portrayed it as un-American” (Ovando, 5). This produced tension and hostility primarily in the Eastern states where one in eleven Americans⁷ were of German origins. The German language was primarily taught in churches which were scrutinized: a clear expression of American xenophobia. Laws were then passed against bilingual education within grade schools⁸, German street names, signs, and food were given Americanized names in order to erase German presence within the towns that were most populated. “Schoolchildren were forced to sign pledges in which they promised not to use any foreign language whatsoever; citizens of German descent were dragged out of their homes at night and forced to kiss the flag or sing the national anthem” (Wüstenbecker). This kind of violence against the Germans in which they were forced to deny their culture and found that assimilating and paying homage to the U.S. would provide them security especially as the Sedition Act⁹ was passed that left Germans fearing for their lives. Hegemonic ideals continued to be constructed “from 1918 to 1920, [when] the Bureau of Naturalization and the Bureau of Education of the United States sponsored bills that ‘provided for substantial federal aid to

⁷ By 1910, Germans were the largest non-English speaking immigrant group in America, with the first wave of migrants arriving in Pennsylvania, New York, and Maryland during colonial times. As a result German was the most commonly studied foreign language. (Karunaratne)

⁸ 34 states had passed English-only requirements in their schools. These laws were argued before the Supreme Court in the case of Meyer v. Nebraska.

⁹ Made it illegal to speak, print, write, or publish any “disloyal, profane, scurrilous, or abusive language” about the government, the constitution, the military, or the flag.

states, on a dollar-matching basis, to finance the teaching of English to aliens and native illiterates' (Higham, 82). Not only did this series of bills target and linguistically marginalize groups of people but it also served as a catalyst to the erasure of many languages. Referring to groups of people as 'aliens and native illiterates' encouraged xenophobic language that dismissed any knowledge, literacy, skills, etc that were non-American. Forced processes of Americanization have inevitably impacted the way that legislation has addressed multilingual and multicultural programs and the way that schools have supported our students and knowledge they bring into the classrooms.

Bilingual education remains a matter of subject that is fairly new to our public education system. Schools began to see an increase in students who did not speak English as the United States faced more immigrants come to America. Given that through language, the United States had already begun to form nationalistic ideologies and sentiments, its response to this lack of knowledge resulted in systematic forced assimilation. "Within the assimilation process, language formed the core of transformation. The lack of a common language makes social cohesion impossible...a common language becomes 'indispensable' to the welfare of society and its absence is an insurmountable barrier to assimilation" (Gonzalez, 40). Bilingual education, however, wasn't always the response to integrating and supporting English Learning Students¹⁰ or immigrants.

¹⁰ By English Language Students (ELS student) I am referring to students whose primary language or the language they most often speak at home is a language other than English, who have a limited proficiency, and who must learn English in school along with academic content. Also referred to as English Language Learners (ELL) or English as Second Language (ESL) students.

In 1963, the United States faced a large number of Cuban immigrants arriving in Florida as they escaped the turmoil of the Cuban Revolution. Although there exist previous records of early immigration, it wasn't until this group immigrated to the U.S. that a program for ESL/ELL students was created. Coral Way Elementary School in Miami, Florida was the first school in the United States to be nationally recognized as the first bilingual and bicultural school¹¹.

Demographic shifts changed the way the legislature, pedagogy, as well as future programs would be spearheaded. In 1965, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was passed as a result of President Lyndon Johnson's *War on Poverty*. ESEA provided federal funds to help students who came from families with low-socioeconomic backgrounds by allocating funds for the initiation of educational programs such as Title I¹² and later bilingual education which was added after the ESEA was amended in 1968. The result of the amendment of the ESEA was the Bilingual Education Act (Title VII) of 1968 which is noted as "the first official federal recognition of the needs of students with limited English speaking ability" (Stewner-Manzanares, 1). After extensive analysis, Title VII encouraged instruction in a foreign language and it also allowed for instruction that included cultural awareness, something that the United States had not emphasized in their curriculums until this act. The Bilingual Education Act (Title VII) provided funds directly to the school districts. However, this funding was acquired via competitive grants that came with extensive requirements. "These grants were to be used by the districts for: (1) resources for educational programs, (2) training for teachers and teacher

¹¹ Sass, Edmund. "American Educational History Timeline." Accessed 05 Dec. 2018.

¹² a provision of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, is a program created by the United States Department of Education to distribute funding to schools and school districts with a high percentage of students from low-income families

aides, (3) development and dissemination of materials, and (4) parent involvement projects” (Stewner-Manzanares, 3). Although Title VII provided the funding necessary to teach students English, it did not explicitly require bilingual instruction nor did it suggest the usage of native languages within their respective programs. The vagueness of Title VII did, however, encourage innovative programs that allowed districts to model as they sought best. Communities of low-income families were prioritized while families of moderate income levels were not which was only the beginning of the unequal support that was given to students of diverse backgrounds and cultures. A second issue that arose from Title VII was that when certain districts began to create and implement bilingual education programs, they risked violating de-segregation laws by separating ESL/ELL students into these specialized programs. A third issue became prevalent when the Bilingual Education Act (Title VII) passed because some states had English-only laws which were violated when bilingual education programs were implemented. A civil rights litigation occurred as a result of the nonspecific guidelines as well as the voluntary participation because many believed that equal opportunities were being denied to ELL/ESL students. “In 1974, Congress amended the Bilingual Education Act of 1968 to clarify the intent and design of programs for LESA¹³ students” (Stewner-Manzanares, 3). The 1974 amendments of the Bilingual Education Act (Title VII) were largely influenced by the following factors: the Lau v. Nichols case and the Equal Educational Opportunity Act of 1974.

The case of Lau v. Nichols was initiated by a lawyer from San Francisco after he learned that one of his client’s son was failing school as a result of not knowing English. This case

¹³ In her study, Stewner-Manzanares uses Limited English Speaking Ability (LESA) which is now recognized as English Language Learners (ELL) or English as a Second Language (ESL).

alleged that 1,800 Chinese students were being denied an equal education because of their limited English ability and Lau expected the San Francisco Unified School District to respond to this negligence as only 1,000 students were being offered the supplemental English courses in school. The district court denied that any rights were being violated which prompted Lau and the rest of the students to appeal the case sending it to the Supreme Court. "The Court determined that the school system's failure to provide supplemental English language instruction to students of Chinese ancestry who spoke no English constituted a violation of the Fourteenth Amendment and the Civil Rights Act because it deprived those students of an opportunity to participate in the public education program" (Lau v. Nichols). The Amendments to the Bilingual Education Act (Title VII) in the 1974 Act specified the definition of a bilingual education program, program goals, regional support centers, and capacity-building efforts. English as a second language (ESL) programs alone were considered insufficient given that a majority of the time instruction occurred in English and students were still experiencing difficulties acquiring the language through English only instruction. The amendments to the Bilingual Education Act in 1974 defined a bilingual education program as one that provided instruction in English and in the native language of the student in order to allow the student to progress effectively through the regular classroom and educational system as quickly as possible. The amendments of Title VII also included the removal of the low-income criterion of the 1968 Act so that all ESL students could benefit from the language immersion programs offered by their individual districts regardless of their family income. These changes strove to make bilingual education more accessible for ELL students thus promoting ideals from the Equal Education Opportunity Act of 1974.

The Amendments to the Bilingual Education Act also specified the introduction of transitional bilingual education programs. These programs were additional support that would facilitate the transition into regular classrooms for students with Limited English Proficiency. Although these programs were to make significant impacts in the increase of English proficiency, they encouraged the erasure of students' culture. The amendments to Title VII promoted assimilative culture as native languages were only to be used if they facilitated the acquisition of the English language. Programs designed only to maintain the native language were excluded from funding because they were seen as promoting anti-American values and cultures. As a result, English reading and writing skills were added to the program goals to further enable ELL students to become proficient in English (Crawford, 1987).

Learning English and assimilating into the dominant American white middle-class culture has been the American public education system's goal for immigrant students. Upholding American values and culture has developed a rhetoric of straight-line assimilation which suggests that by going through the public education system students should be able to grasp onto these values seamlessly as they simultaneously forget their own cultures and their own ancestral traditions and language.

Public education programs and funding have fostered xenophobic ideologies as they have encouraged the erasure of the students' familial culture. The public education system has worked endlessly to create a common language and common culture that will propel immigrant students to be successful within the US at the cost of their own identities and it has taken many academics and social theorists to challenge these views. Research conducted by educational researchers have suggested that "accommodation and acculturation without assimilation

involves conforming to certain rules of the dominant society and making certain cultural adaptations while preserving the group's cultural identity" (Lee, 10). Lee challenges the ethnocentric assumptions behind straight-line assimilation theories by demonstrating the significance of ethnic communities and their cultures as immigrants adapt and achieve academic success without having to undermine their cultures. This multi-ethnic approach allows for immigrant children to transform and recreate their culture as they are enriched with new cultural ideals. As Lopez states, "It should not be forgotten that a language is rather more than an instrument of communication: it is, above all, a way of seeing and constructing reality, the result of an accumulated history" (Lopez, 471). Schools serve as a main catalyst for the formation of youth identities and should be building rather than breaking down students' knowledge, experiences, and cultures. "Ethnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity -- I am my language. Until I can take pride in my language, I cannot take pride in myself" (Anzaldua, 81). Like Anzaldua states, many students are deprived of getting to know their past, their present and their future selves because of dominant cultural narratives and straight-line assimilation theories. Many states have become accomplices of limiting multilingual and multicultural diversity and have therefore continued to linguistically marginalize many communities. Another formative cultural theorists, Linda Tuhiwai-Smith includes "We know what it is like to have our identities regulated by laws and our languages and customs removed from our lives. Fragmentation is not an indigenous project, it is something we are recovering from" (Tuhiwai-Smith 97). In countries where systematic education is mandatory for children and adolescents, language and cultural erasure is always a discreet act that is brought upon students that don't speak English.

In the American education system we often see the importance that is given not only to learning English but mastering it as well. This concurs with Nelson Maldonado-Torres's explanation that racial inferiority arises as a cause of colonization. The colonizer embodies this ideology when he refers to the *Ego Conquiro* in which the colonizer obtains security at the expense of others and refers to those who are colonized as *damnés* when he explains, "the damné is either invisible or excessively visible" (Maldonado-Torres 257). This paradox adequately describes the role that those with less linguistic capital play in public education today. A big part of why colonization thrives in the United States is because of the language they use to constantly make those colonized feel like they are inferior, invisible, and denied and yet these communities are the ones that stand out the most because of their unique traditions, wardrobe, customs, and ability to communicate with others. When Maldonado-Torres mentions *The Decolonial Turn*, he explains that in order to destroy these notions of invisibility, one needs to turn away from what he calls the *imperial attitude* and that the *decolonial truth* must also mark the entry of those colonized into the realm of thought/ institutions that were before unknown to these subjects. From a young age students are labeled as English language learners (ELL) or English proficient which allows for students to be targeted. A closer analysis of California's English immersion and bilingual educational programs will give much insight to how a demographically diverse state has failed to create critical consciousness surrounding a topic that has a large impact in various governmental fields and not just educational programs and opportunities.

Chapter 3: California: Missed Opportunities

California has been a demographically diverse state as different racial and ethnic groups have immigrated to the Golden State or have been displaced by those whose intent was to conquer and colonize the land. “Between 1850 and 1860, California averaged about 5 or 6% annual population gains due to migration alone. This was the result of the mining boom, but also ranchers and farmers heading to the newly opened lands recently acquired from Spain” (Stone). This large era of migration also brought along government workers, businessmen, and laborers that were meant to develop the existing land through the creation of towns, cities, industries, and railroads. “Oil, movies, growing west-coast manufacturing, urbanization, military and naval investments, growing trans-pacific trade, and agriculture were the key drivers of growth until the 1930s” (Stone). The 1930s brought with them the Dust Bowl Migration that led thousands of people from Oklahoma to California in search of work in the fields¹⁴. It is important to recognize the displacement that the development of the west coast brought upon indigenous tribes that had already occupied the land in the years prior to the migration of those searching to develop newly conquered territory. Although this sort of displacement had already been occurring throughout the United States, these western ideas of development were beginning to reach California, leaving indigenous communities no option but to assimilate or be forgotten.

When a country and its people are colonized, not only are their territories being seized but also their future generations. What derives from this forced integration is the displacement

¹⁴ *Dust Bowl Migration - Rural Migration News | Migration Dialogue*.
<https://migration.ucdavis.edu/rmn/more.php?id=1355>. Accessed 20 Mar. 2019.

of indigenous communities (Tongva, Chumash), their traditions, languages, practices, etc. especially while the colonizer is inhibiting these colonized spaces. Often times we think that by regaining independence or becoming one of the most diverse states, everything returns to its “normality” and indigenous communities are free to thrive once again. However, the fact of the matter is that with colonization comes ideals and practices among other things that become ingrained into those colonized. Nelson Maldonado-Torres refers to this endless cycle of colonization and the impact that it has on those colonized as the *post-colonial* period which is much more than just a chronological description but rather the study of colonial dialogue and how it continues to affect modern society. These waves of migration and immigration California has witnessed as well as the large social and cultural changes, however, has not always reflected in the systematic educational practices. As a result of the different waves of migration, the state of California has set a precedent for the development and changes to bilingual education programs that have been implemented throughout the country. As demographic diversity has been a continuous and growing reality for California, it has faced new demands that strive towards creating and achieving equity and equal opportunity for all of its students. In many ways this has been a challenge for California given that despite having its own Department of Education, in general it supports standardized curriculums and therefore Westernized- nationalistic ideologies.

In 1998, the state of California passed a proposition, known as Prop 227, that required English to be the sole language of instruction within public schools. This was a proposition that affected low socioeconomic-immigrant students that did not speak English as well as those who sought to master a second language. It required that all instruction be held in only English and it

provided initial short-term placement, not normally exceeding one year, in intensive sheltered English immersion programs for children not fluent in English. Proposition 227 was covered because many argued that for most of California's non-English speaking students, bilingual education actually meant monolingual instruction, SPANISH-ONLY for the first 4 to 7 years of bilingual instruction. Voters emphasized that immigrant children already knew their native language and that the only thing needed was for public schools to teach them English in order to be prosperous in the US. This was to be achieved through "sheltered English immersion" classes in order to facilitate learning English to non-English speaking students. Although most research shows that complete immersion in a language is the most effective method for achieving language proficiency¹⁵, this proposition also encouraged xenophobic sentiments that discouraged students' inherited knowledge and removed classroom autonomy for teachers throughout the state.

Proposition 227 was intended to serve as a progressive tool that would help Limited English students acquire the English language at a quicker rate which in exchange would facilitate their integration into their classroom and therefore the public school system. Much like the bilingual programs encouraged through the Bilingual Education Act of 1968, there was little or no clarity on the intent but especially the design of such programs. The ambiguity of instruction led many schools to put limited English speaking children of all ages and languages into one classroom¹⁶. This was an inefficient way of addressing students' language acquisition

¹⁵ In her study Miano expresses, "in terms of language proficiency gains, the success of the Spanish immersion students suggests that this is a model worth expanding to other languages and different postsecondary contexts" as a result of the great improvements that those who were immersed into the language had in their oral expression.

¹⁶ According to arguments and rebuttals presented in the voters' ballot of 1998.

because this assumed that all students enrolled at these schools shared the same levels of English proficiency and that all students would learn at the same rate despite coming from different language backgrounds.

Teachers also found themselves in a predicament and mostly opposed Proposition 227 because teachers could be personally sued for teaching in the children's language even if the usage was to help the students learn English. Limiting teachers within the classroom not only took away their classroom autonomy but also put them in a situation that more than likely made them feel helpless as educators. When it comes to language acquisition, it is important to recognize and understand that successes are not the result of one instructional method imposed on every school by state government. Even though the 1970 law requiring bilingual instruction expired shortly after, there still continued to exist very successful bilingual programs that were outlawed by the passing of Prop 227. "Prop 227 did not outlaw all bilingual education programs. It did, however require that parents sign a waiver if they wanted to keep their children in a bilingual classroom. Without a waiver, ELLs were automatically placed in English-only classes" (Sanchez 2016). This was one of the restrictions that limited access to bilingual programs. Often times, parents were unaware of the existence of these programs as they were rarely advertised. In some districts it was parents' advocacy for bilingual programs that resulted in the creation of classes and curriculums, something that rarely occurred within immigrant communities that were less informed or were less inclined to demand of their local schools.

After 18 years of English-Only instruction, a biliteracy movement sprouted in California. On November 8th, 2016 Proposition 58 was introduced in California ballots and Bilingual Education was once again welcomed into schools. Proposition 58 repealed bilingual education

restrictions enacted by Proposition 227 in 1998 and encouraged districts to introduce bilingual education in efforts of enabling English acquisition. Proposition 58 exemplifies the importance of de-westernizing our public education system. A proposition that supported bilingual education, did so while targeting linguistically marginalized students. “Teachers, parents, school principals, local school board members, and Governor Jerry Brown support Proposition 58 to help students learn English as quickly as possible and expand opportunities for English speakers to master a second language” (Proposition 58). The vote for bilingual programming was never approached with the intent of giving all students an opportunity to gain biliteracy but rather only targeted and encouraged the assimilation of many students. Looking closely at the language that is used within education policies, it is evident that there exist racial tensions when advocating for bilingual education. Bourdieu’s “symbolic power” is exemplified by colonial domination, wherein the colonizer imposes its language and culture on the colonized through “coercion and condescension, although both the colonizer and the colonized do not recognize it as such” (Bourdieu).

In many ways Proposition 58 suggested that bilingual education was being incorporated into a wide variety of districts and being made part of curriculum, however, it was a disguised way of controlling the way that students are being integrated into public schools. The following excerpt comes from the proposal for Proposition 58.

“California is home to thousands of multinational businesses that must communicate daily with associates around the world; and (d) Whereas, California employers across all sectors, both public and private, are actively recruiting multilingual employees because of their ability to forge stronger bonds with customers, clients, and business partners; and Whereas, Multilingual skills are necessary for our country’s national security and essential to conducting diplomacy and international programs; and (f) Whereas, California has a natural reserve of the world’s largest languages, including English, Mandarin, and Spanish, which are critical to the state’s economic trade and diplomatic efforts; and (g) Whereas, California has the unique opportunity to provide all parents with the choice to have their children educated to high

standards in English and one or more additional languages, including Native American languages, thereby increasing pupils' access to higher education and careers of their choice; and 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, origin, 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..." (From Proposition 58 Official Title and Summary).

This excerpt validates the French sociologist and philosopher Pierre Bourdieu's theory on coded language which he explains as "a part of the ideological strategy of Euro-American elites, serving to justify their domination of communities of color while disguising openly racist sentiments" (Wortham 39). Even as the state of California recognized the importance that bilingualism had on professional, academic, and global levels, it nonetheless emphasized the prevalence of English over other languages that are just as common within the state. Much like Maldonado-Torres's argument over the *damnés* from the previous chapter, Bourdieu acknowledges the ease with which public education has been able to continue to mask nationalism and patriotism into its most so called "progressive" policies.

In its efforts to give credit to bilingual students, California passed Assembly Bill 815 in 2011 that established the State Seal of Biliteracy. This seal would recognize high school graduates who have attained a high level of proficiency in speaking, reading, and writing in one or more languages in addition to English and takes the form of a gold seal affixed to the high school diplomas of qualified students. According to Monte, "local communities desire to honor the contributions and languages of growing immigrant populations" led to the organization of the community to develop this honor, however, the reality of this is that it discriminates many students that come from diverse backgrounds. In 2018, the State of California awarded 55,000 seals of biliteracy which amounts to a significant number when compared to when the program

first started in 2011-12. This has been a significant figure given that California is a diverse state with many Spanish speaking students. Spanish is also the language with the highest percentage of recipients which amount to 77 percent of the recipients awarded with this seal. In many ways, a seal that was meant to highlight students of diverse linguistic abilities, has found avenues to further discriminate them. English-only students that learn a second language are being awarded the Seal of Biliteracy at rapid rates when compared to students whose second language is English. This alarming comparison is a result of differences in minimum required levels of proficiency, accessibility to required exams, as well as disadvantages that immigrant students face as English Language Learners (ELL). A seal that is meant to empower and embrace the visibility of world languages, has come with its own hurdles for marginalized communities.

To be a young adult, living in a country that is so diverse and is often invested in foreign affairs, being bilingual gives many priorities within job markets and colleges. According to research conducted by the distinguished UCLA professor Patricia Gandara, "in every industry bilingualism was a desirable trait for some or all positions...66% of employers responded that they would prefer a bilingual employee over a monolingual English speaker" (Gandara 2). The Seal of Biliteracy was meant to be a certification that would give students access to these privileges. However, as multiple states began to award these seals, minimum proficiency priorities were left to the jurisdiction of each state. For example, "a student graduating from a public school in North Carolina can earn a seal at the Intermediate Low level of proficiency, while students in Louisiana and the District of Columbia must score at the Advanced Low level of proficiency" (Davin & Heineke). Minimum proficiency requirements could be detrimental to linguistically diverse students of color depending on the state that they reside in. The lack of a

common proficiency level also compromises the validity of the Seal of Biliteracy. Employers and universities can not rely on the Seal of Biliteracy as proof of skill level because a minimum proficiency throughout states varies which causes ambiguity when individuals cannot carry out as complex tasks even though they're recipients of this seal. Aside from minimum proficiency requirements, being awarded the Seal of Biliteracy comes at a price. A price that largely influences the demographics of students that are obtaining this achievement.

Taking a class in the secondary language and passing a standardized exam such as AP or IB, will grant students the Seal of Biliteracy. In many cases students "could be required to pay for the assessments that might be associated with earning a bilingual seal" (Davin & Heineke). These costs can be subsidized through programs of free or reduced lunch but largely depend on the district given that its participation in the program is voluntary. "The price of an AP exam [is] set at approximately \$92 USD and the price of an IB exam at approximately \$110 USD. Further, it is well documented that ELs have limited access to honors and AP courses (Callahan, 2005; Callahan, et al. 2009). The costs of the qualifying exams prevent students from low socio-economic backgrounds from taking these exams and therefore from receiving the Seal of Biliteracy. Bilingual students yet again face another obstacle that minimizes their representation in this honor.

For an honor that was created to promote world languages and embrace the linguistic and cultural diversity of students, the Seal of Biliteracy and its policy found a way of excluding students of diverse backgrounds. "In a comprehensive survey, Hopstock and Stephenson (2003) found that only 1% and 0.8% of ELLs in high school enrolled in AP math and AP science courses compared to enrollment rates of 3.2% for all students. The fact that ELL and bilingual students

may have no access at all to courses or assessments in their home or heritage language is also a concern” (Davin & Heineke). The misrepresentation of immigrant students in AP and IB courses as stereotypes of low achievement prevent students from engaging or being accepted into these classes. Districts within low socioeconomic communities that lack a variation of AP/IB classes would need to develop a specialized class that would prepare students for a qualifying exam. It is important to note that complications for immigrant students don’t stop at access to AP/IB classes and exams.

It seems as though immigrant students have to work twice as hard to prove their bilingual proficiency levels. A requirement of the award includes mastery of the English language. ELL students are to assimilate into American public education through accelerated English learning classes, this is designated so that they are able to perform at the levels that the rest of their peers perform. Regardless of how well they perform in these classes and on the regular standardized exams administered by their teachers, ELL students are still required to provide further evidence of their English Proficiency which can be an extensive process that many students receive little guidance in. In many cases, being forced to assimilate to American Public schools can also give students reasons to forget or undermine their own cultures and languages, a true tragedy. This categorization of students is rather disturbing because those who are labeled as ELL students are forced to give up their native language and instead become immersed in a language that for them is secondary. Often times these students are made to feel as if they were at a disadvantage but in reality these students are excelling in so many ways as they are forced to become bilingual instead of just being monolingual like most students at their age tend to be.

Changes have to be made to awards that are meant to embrace cultural and linguistic diversity in order to substantively benefit students of all backgrounds and abilities. The lack of support and the continued development of obstacles that students of color face is an outrage and needs to be addressed. The California Seal of Biliteracy, although well intended, perpetuates achievement gaps and should be reassessed in order to be more accessible to all students. “Mastery of two or more languages is an important twenty-first century skill, with economic, social and personal benefits” (Monte) and yet students are not striving to achieve such an honor. It is no doubt that the messages our schools and administrators voice to our students, heavily impacts the way that they see themselves, their cultures, languages, and education.

In 1999 a great study on California dropout rates was conducted for the Merrow Report and aired in PBS television. The film *Learning Matters: Lost in Translation* investigated reasons for why there is a growing gap in achievement and learning between Latinxs, Black, and White students in California and explored the way in which language barriers, among other factors, negatively impacted student interest in school. Many students implicitly internalized Western ideologies adopted by Americans and slowly forgot their cultural identities. Upon being asked whether their parents liked them speaking English, a second grade boy responded with, “Mine does. They want me to speak English better, because I *was* a Mexican and I didn’t know how to read in English and write English and speak English.” This student, very much like Gloria Anzaldua’s anecdote, found that by learning English they had climbed a social ladder that is only attainable by those who master the language. A student that was soon to graduate and walk across the stage asked the announcer to “Say [his] name in English please” (43:25). These

were both instances in which the students had began the process of assimilating into a culture that wasn't their primary culture. This was of course all in exchange for acceptance, success and acknowledgment. These responses, although saddening, are not surprising given the history of America and the varying historical policies that prevented students from speaking anything other than English in classrooms during the 1960s.

*"El Anglo con cara de inocente
nos arrancó la lengua"
-- (Anzaldua, 76).*

Chapter 4: Accommodation and Acculturation w/o Assimilation

Multilingual and multicultural education carry benefits that oftentimes go unnoticed and as a result are dismissed from public school classrooms and curriculum. Multilingual programs should serve a greater purpose than encouraging a bilingual upbringing for our students. In promoting bilingual education within our schools the US should also look to foster a greater sense of global awareness for our students and make them aware of cultural subjects that exist within and beyond our country and personal cultures. By learning a second or third language, students are able to gain linguistic capital which offers an abundance of rewards so immense that can be rarely achieved with other forms of capital. Learning and being able to exchange cultural and linguistic capital within classrooms beginning in the early years of education can serve as catalysts for greater opportunities for the child as well as for society at large. Introducing multilingual opportunities to children in elementary schools will not only allow them to master the language at an early age but it will also encourage them to continue exploring the culture, their needs, and further interactions.

Academic success should not be limited to western ideologies and should not be defined by outdated nationalistic lenses. Assimilation, as mentioned in chapter 2, has hindered the way that the United States and states such as California have approached bilingual education. It has always been a response for integrating immigrant children or those with limited English proficiency. While this is important, as no child should feel lost or confused within a classroom, it has limited the way that the US has approached bilingualism for the rest of its students. Political, national, and hegemonic narratives have tainted language diversity and have stirred this topic to be received as anti-American, preventing them from seeing the great positives that

come with achieving bilingualism. Instead of forcing students of diverse backgrounds to assimilate into the classrooms and renounce their culture, they should be received in an environment that accommodates to their needs, an environment in which acculturation¹⁷ is being fostered for all students to learn from each other and have the space for greater conversations.

The English language has been recognized as the most globalized language and has therefore been reinforced in all official spaces both in America and globally. This has given much power to the language which in turn has caused other languages to be undermined within the fields of academia. As stated in one of the sections of California's Proposition 227 "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 international business, thereby being the language of economic opportunity...". In 1998 when this proposition passed, this might have been the case, however, as immigration continues to increase and as foreign countries continue to economically and socially engage with the United States, this certainly becomes questionable. "Spanish speakers will comprise the biggest minority group in the U.S., a country where students in high schools and colleges are encouraged to take French classes because French is considered more 'cultured'. But for a language to remain alive it must be used. By the end of this century English and not Spanish, will be the mother tongue of most Chicanos and Latinos" (Anzaldúa, 81). Reflecting on my analysis of bilingual education in the United States from Chapter 1, it is evident that Western European languages (with the exclusion of Spanish) are

¹⁷ Acculturation can be defined as the process of adopting the cultural traits or social patterns of another group.

avored within academic curriculums and programs. As previously mentioned, after WWII, an anti-German hostility grew throughout the United States and yet German, French, and Japanese still continue to be commonly spoken and encouraged languages within public schools. Although 72% of students in the United States decide to enroll in Spanish classes¹⁸, the students aren't recognized in the same way as students who enroll in German, French, and Japanese programs. In an article Shaw states "as Mary Jane Curry, co-author of 'Academic writing in a global context', points out, the growing dominance of English in academia has put scholars from non-English speaking countries at a disadvantage in publishing and sharing research across borders." Giving power to one country, culture, and language has and will continue to cause the erasure of many cultures and therefore languages as well. It will silence the voices of indigenous languages that have been suppressed and will continue to alienate our students within classrooms that promote knowledge.

The recognition of the ethnic and racial compositions that make up our classrooms should further encourage the implementation of bilingual education into our standardized curriculums. "When someone with the authority of a teacher describes the world and you are not in it, there is a moment of psychic disequilibrium, as if you looked into a mirror and saw nothing" (Rich). When thinking about ELL students or those who are first generation Americans, it is difficult to overlook the psychological damage that they are being exposed to as their identities are suppressed and their voices limited. Educators hold great power in shaping

¹⁸ This comes from a study in which Spanish, French, German, Latin, and Japanese are recognized as some of the most studied languages in the US. This recognition is rather interesting given that US politics has historically had controversies with both the German and Japanese and yet their language and culture still hold greater value within American public schools. (Sawe)

students' characters, passions, and aspirations. It is up to those in power to embrace the foundational knowledge that students as individuals hold so that they feel empowered and compelled to share their experiences with others. This is why "selective acculturation forges an intergenerational alliance for successful adaptation that is absent among youths who have severed bonds with their past in the pursuit of acceptance by their native peers" (Lee 10). When one is willing to dismiss our own histories, culture, and knowledge from a young age, it becomes more and more difficult to identify with one's ancestral roots which in turn inhibits our ability to adopt other's cultural and social traits. Assimilation forces us to surrender our language, surrender our ties with our native roots, surrender our identity. "Children who learn the language and culture of their new country without losing those of the old have a much better understanding of their place in the world" (Lee 10). This is the essence for the importance of creating bilingual education programs that are not only sustainable but also ethical. Programs that increase global awareness and expose students to cultural subjects are programs worth investing time, money, and effort into.

Through exposure to different languages at a younger age, students will be able to recognize different cultures and therefore develop multiple sensibilities that will help them develop their interests and build their character. "We could conclude that, today, globalization appears to be inevitable and probably necessary to sustain progress, but also something that has to be offset with precautions and structural solutions to avoid the harmful consequences it may bring and, in fact, has already brought, of which the loss of cultural identity of minority peoples is not the least important" (Lopez 468). Through the incorporation of bilingual opportunities within the framework of the public education system one can hope that students

will not only develop skills that they lacked before but also develop a sense of compassion for those who continue to be marginalized both within the United States as well as in countries around the world. The goals for bilingual education programs should also aim to develop critical consciousness towards global interactions between home countries and those who the US negotiates with but also pre-existing cultures within the United States. Living in a capitalistic world in which it is inevitable to dismiss global business, it is only right to have the lingual abilities to be able to communicate with investors and businesses around the world. Achieving proficiency in any language that will allow such forms of communication to occur can not be postponed nor introduced in high school. It is imperative that students receive bilingual instruction during their early childhood years in order to achieve language proficiency as well as a global understanding of capitalistic and imperialistic events. For this reason it is important that we step away from thinking that bilingual education only benefits immigrant students and that we are doing them a favor by helping them assimilate into American society. "Reality – the limits of reality – and the desire to open up to others obliges us to be plurilingual, but this obligation should affect everyone and in no way prevent conservation of one's own language: an unequivocal sign of individual and collective identity" (Lopez 471). As a collective we are able to create bridges that connect us to one another. Let languages be our commonality that unites us through verbal commonalities.

In my time at Scripps College as an undergraduate student I have had the privilege of being in various classrooms in neighboring cities to Claremont, CA. My first ever experience teaching occurred as a result of a class that is offered at Scripps named Core 03: Cultural Teaching Clinic in which I chose to informally teach Spanish to a group of sixth grade students.

This experience was what encouraged me to pursue education but more specifically be an advocate for bilingual education. My students were challenged and they were very intrigued by the material that my partner and I introduced to them every week. As my time with them ended, they learned that I would be spending a semester abroad in Madrid, Spain. It was at this moment that they realized that one day in the near future, they too could use the knowledge that was developed during that semester during their vacations or during their time in college. Although the enthusiasm and dedication for learning a second language was very vivid within our classroom, my group of students struggled. This experience greatly influenced the way that I would spend my semester abroad and the work that I decided to take on.

As previously mentioned, I was offered the opportunity to volunteer at one of the local elementary schools as an English Assistant while I studied abroad in Spain. I was truly impressed by the level of proficiency that these first graders demonstrated as we were able to engaged in everyday conversations which came natural to them. It was a unique experience for me to be in classrooms with such young students that could code switch between Spanish and English with such ease and even be able to inquire advanced level questions. I often times reflected on my experience in Claremont and the great disservice that we are doing to our students by not encouraging bilingual education while in elementary schools. While abroad my students entered a spelling bee competition in which their bracket consisted of first through third graders. I remembered working hard with my students since they were the youngest and I felt they had a great disadvantage. To my surprise, I was welcome the next day with a huge trophy and beaming faces as they all shouted that one of my students had won the competition within their division. I felt proud and yet guilty for having doubted or feared that my students wouldn't

have a shot at victory. It was evident that, as first-graders, my students had learned just as much English as third graders had in the two years that they had been learning the language.

I recount these anecdotes because these were pivotal experiences that allowed me to witness and question why our public school system is failing to give our students multiple ways of expression. I wondered why our public education was so fixated on emphasizing English when almost all European countries required their students to engage in bilingual programming. A country that claims to offer the best public school education lacked programming that would allow students to be global ambassadors without having the need of translators. Dismantling anti-immigrant rhetoric and anti-bilingual/ pro-assimilationist ideologies can only be the beginning to creating and encouraging sustainable bilingual educational programs throughout the United States.

Anti-bilingual education supporters claim that bilingual education is anti-American and that students should focus on learning English because after all they are students are being educated in the United States. There exist claims that English proficiency levels are declining as a result of deviation from monolingual education. In his study Wortham quotes “the present attack on bilingual education should not be understood as a simple critique of methodologies... the present assault on bilingual education is fundamentally political and a manifestation of a colonial ideology toward language minorities in the United States.” This framework is a very toxic and selfish way of controlling marginalized communities and languages because it prevents all students from receiving and engaging in an education that will make them great global ambassadors. Deconstructing racist ideologies within academia are the beginning steps towards building those bridges between communities around the world.

Conclusion

Politicizing education has altered the way that educational curriculum has been created and modified over the years. It has allowed for racial tensions and ideologies to influence the content that is presented through schools in the United States and more specifically California. It has been a way in which English only students have been deprived of greater academic opportunities while those with limited English proficiency have been taught to outgrow their first languages. At times it is difficult to understand that nationalism, patriotism, and racial tensions have implicitly encouraged xenophobic attitudes towards multilingual and multicultural educational opportunities. This is at its core a contradiction, for in a world that is competitive within global markets, trade and such the United States should focus and support programs that will lead all students to higher linguistic and cultural abilities.

Planning to integrate bilingual education in public elementary schools across the United States is an investment that will allow children to grow up being aware of the world that they are living in and the diverse populations that they are to encounter while living in a diverse country. Students would be able to engage critically in conversation and in practice which would encourage productive interactions across various communities. Black cultural theorist bell hooks expresses ideas of transformative pedagogy and its intentions of educating for critical consciousness as she suggests that multicultural and (if I may include) multilingual education help deconstruct hierarchies that exist within cultures and languages taught in schools. This post-colonial theorist, focuses on this idea of decentering Western civilization in hopes of transforming classrooms into being more accepting of broadening students perspectives and global knowledge. Accepting of cultures and ideologies that expand further

than our own cultures will allow students to build on their character and encourage them to be more empathetic towards those who they are surrounded by. hooks not only encourages a transformation within the education system but also suggests that we work towards a world in which neighbors and strangers eagerly develop a world perspective as opposed to a return to nationalism, isolationism, and xenophobia which is often times transmitted within our communities but especially within our education system.

The globalization of the American public education system can be approached through the implementation of culture awareness into everyday teaching. hooks suggests that this system moves away from the 'single' norm of thought and experience, in other words, step away from the idea that there is a universal way of thinking, doing, and learning. This is not to say that less importance should be given to learning English or even having pride in one's American roots and culture, but rather work towards learning to appreciate and be aware of the many cultures that exist around us. When working on sustaining foreign languages within elementary schools, I have learned the importance of accepting the notion of decentering western ideologies and rather embracing plurilingualism as well as multiculturalism in order to help relieve the issue of voice or rather the lack of voices heard within classrooms. hooks encourages educators to recognize the value of each individual voice and the impact that regaining voices has on students mentally and emotionally as they grow and enter the professional stages of their lives. bell hooks speaks of the importance of sustaining such pedagogies and the positive impact that it will have on students in the long run, but also acknowledges the difficulties that come with the implementation of these new styles of pedagogy. Bilingual and dual immersion programs require specific teaching credentials and

skill-sets that many monolingual teachers lack. This is especially common for educators who work in districts, counties, or states that are primarily English speaking and not as culturally diverse. Educators who work within culturally diverse communities share concerns of not being able to share minorities' experiences and therefore find it difficult to shift their teaching towards sustainable pedagogies in which they would find themselves teaching on experiences, cultures, or languages that aren't within their areas of expertise. Acknowledging these concerns is vital in being able to create and introduce sustainable programs that will result in the success and best interest of our students and while there might not exist quick-long term solutions, there are ways in which we can begin to destigmatize plurilingual and multicultural education.

Major changes in ideology will allow educators to sustain cultural pedagogies and together work towards the promotion of plurilingual and multicultural education. I foremost suggest that recognizing the value that bilingual education holds for all students is key in developing a transformative learning environment. Until policy makers and educators recognize that mastering more than one language does not harm but rather strengthens our students, society, global market, etc, there will always be a negative judgment of those who enter our public schools with limited English proficiencies. Students should not be made to feel as if the knowledge that they carry is less than the one they are to receive nor should they feel like they need to choose one or the other in order to succeed in this country.

La educación no es un tema que debería ser limitado sino es un privilegio que debería ser compartido y dado a todo aquello que demuestre interés por el aprendizaje. El ser bilingüe no solo funciona como una oportunidad para mejorarse uno como persona pero también ayuda a desarrollar relaciones importantes entre un mundo que está híper conectado. Como

sociedad, tenemos una responsabilidad de encontrar y difundir los recursos necesarios que no ayudarán a preservar los conocimientos y los idiomas que han sido rechazados o borrados por el sistema educativo de los estados unidos. Es nuestra responsabilidad de proteger a nuestros estudiantes y al igual ayudar a desarrollar el conocimiento de aquellos quienes no tienen los recursos en casa para poder aprender idiomas tan diversos. Será una lucha exhaustiva contra un historial de racismo y de patriotismo pero es tiempo de que tomemos acción y pidamos que el sistema educativo no siga limitando estas oportunidades de desarrollo con la excusa de que es un ataque contra los Estados Unidos.

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