FOR TEACHERS AND TEACHING

English immersion programs often fail in producing proficient speakers of English. Why do children from bilingual backgrounds, who spend most of their time speaking English at home, fail to develop better language skills? This study examines how teachers and children interact in the classroom, focusing on the role of English as a second language (ESL) instruction. It also explores the impact of ESL programs on children's academic performance and social integration.

Collier (2002) notes that "the role of ESL programs is to provide a structured environment for children to learn and develop their language skills. However, the effectiveness of these programs is often questioned due to the lack of standardized curricula and teaching materials. Teachers who are not trained in ESL instruction may not be effective in providing a high-quality learning experience for their students."

CALLING THE CHILDREN

FOR THE CHILDREN

In response to the issues raised by Collier, this study examines the effectiveness of ESL programs in preparing children for the challenges of a bilingual society. The research findings indicate that ESL programs can be effective in improving children's language skills, but they must be carefully designed and implemented. Teachers who are trained in ESL instruction can provide a positive learning environment for children who are learning English as a second language. The study also highlights the importance of family involvement in the education of children from bilingual backgrounds.

Call the children's instructional practices in English immersion programs need to be revised to better accommodate their needs. Teachers must be trained in ESL instruction and work closely with families to ensure that children are receiving a high-quality education.

For Teachers and Teaching

The potential of English immersion programs is realized when teachers and children work together to create a positive learning environment. By providing structured opportunities for children to practice their language skills, teachers can help them develop the language proficiency necessary for success in a bilingual society.

OBLIA GARCIA

What's in a Name?

Emergent Bilinguals and ESL:
FOR EDUCATIONAL POLICYMAKERS

Focusing on the emergent bilingualism of these children, instead of on their limitations and their English learning status, would also help policymakers base educational decisions for these children on their strengths. Thus, instead of providing the remedial education with which these children are often confronted, educational policymakers would be providing them with more rigorous curriculum and more challenging instructional material. Insisting that these children are emergent bilinguals in a bilingual continuum would also call for the development of bilingual education programs and bilingual pedagogy for all children, not just for those to whom this article refers as emergent bilinguals.

Without an ELL or LEP category, it would also be easier for educational policymakers to demand that assessment be valid for all bilinguals. A more flexible norm could then be adopted that would include all children along a bilingual continuum, instead of insisting on a rigid monolingual standard.

More significantly, however, is the fact that if the category LEP is abandoned, there will be no need to exit children out of that category in the 1 to 3 years that the federal government mandates. Instead, emergent bilingual children would slide along the bilingual continuum as their language practices develop complexity and eventually encompass the academic standard language practices of the school. Educational policymakers could thus be more patient, understanding that, as research has clearly shown, it takes children 5 to 7 years to develop decontextualized academic skills in one or the other language (Cummins, 1981, 2000; Hakuta, Goto Butler, & Witt, 2000).

FOR PARENTS AND COMMUNITY

Calling these students by a name that does not focus on their limitations would mean that the parental language practices in the home would be the source of the educational expertise. Instead of assigning blame to parents and community for language practices that exclude English, using the proper terminology would encourage the school to see the parents and community as the experts in the child’s language and cultural practices that are the basis of all learning. As such, the parents and community would participate in the education of their children from a position of strength, and not from a position of limitations.

FOR THE LANGUAGE EDUCATION PROFESSION AND TESOL

The language education profession is divided in ways that do not support the holistic education of children. Focusing on the children’s emergent bilingualism would integrate the four separate aspects of language education—the teaching of English to speakers of other languages (TESOL bilingual education, BE), the teaching of the heritage language when available (HL), and the teaching of another foreign language (FL). Teaching would then be centered on the student, and not on the profession.

By focusing on the children’s emergent bilingualism and making bilingualism the norm, the field of language education would be able to meet the center of all educational endeavors for all children. The language education profession must include not just those who speak other languages at home, but also those who speak English and who are becoming bilingual. For TESOL, this change would result in a much more inclusive stance that would recognize the bilingualism of the students served by the profession as an important resource in teaching and learning English.

FOR SOCIETY

Bilingual practices are more important in the 21st century than ever. It is clear that the ability to translate, to develop flexible language practices, to language bilingually or translanguagely (García, 2009) will be very important resources for all in the future.

The language resources of the United States have never been greater. Despite its insistence on being a monolingual state, the United States has perhaps the world’s most complex bilingual practices. The benefits of harnessing these linguistic resources are more evident than ever for society at large.

CONCLUSION

The names we use mean something. By looking at children through a monolingual and monoglossic lens and insisting on categorizing them as LEPs or ELLs, the U.S. educational system perpetuates educational inequities and squander’s valuable linguistic resources.

I have argued in this article that in order to restore educational equity and harness bilingualism as a resource, we should start by referring to these children as emergent bilinguals. Placing bilingualism at the heart of TESOL will yield many benefits. There will not only be benefits to the children, but also to teachers, educational policymakers, parents, communities, and society at large. And there will be benefit to the language education profession, a profession that is in need of serious overhaul. For TESOL itself, adopting the use of the term emergent bilinguals to talk about the students it serves—instead of English language learners, limited English proficient, or English as an additional language students—would mean including the many languages that make up the TESOL...
profession and its students, acknowledging the important role that the students’ home languages have in English language acquisition, and presenting the acquisition of English not as a monolingual or monoglossic endeavor, but as one that is bilingual at its core. It would finally recognize that success in teaching English means becoming bilingual, and that the success of the TESOL profession depends, in large part, on the multilingualism of the world and the bilingualism of its students—and not on English monolingualism.

THE AUTHOR

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REFERENCES


What the “Other” Taught Me About Bilingual Basics, Visuals, and Stories as We Articulate Multilingualism in TESOL

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The more, the better
The sooner, the better
The faster, the better
The harder, the better
The louder, the better

Often, it seems that this is what the public understands about bilingualism. If we want children to speak English, some seem to believe we must give more, sooner, faster, harder, and louder. Because of misunderstanding, each of us in TESOL is called on to explain our really complex understandings of language, culture, and pedagogy. Often we get a few minutes to accomplish this task. If we are in class, a grocery store, at the family dinner table, or on a plane, we will be asked about bilingual and multilingual education. Thus, the purpose of this article is to share what the “other” (i.e., the general public) in the Central Valley of California taught me about the importance of visuals and storytelling as we articulate the value of multilingualism within TESOL.

The beginning credential students at the university where I work as some in TESOL, struggle to understand the basics of bilingualism, and it is from this context that we expand and link to the value of multilingualism in the 21st century. When Cummins (2008) described multilingual classroom with some level of ESL support for children speak additional languages, he aptly captures the understanding: many of the future and present teachers of the Central Valley, which also be true within the TESOL global community. The very same credential students seem to grasp the value of the larger vision of multilingualism of TESOL, as stated in TESOL’s vision (see Taylor, this is). However, the oppressive pedagogical environment of the last decade made it a huge challenge for these future teachers to apply the TESOL vision to the multilingual students in their own classrooms in California. The challenge is to transform global theory daily into practice. The future teachers in California, the previous Troike/Alatis de TESOL as to whether TESOL was good or bad for bilingual education not history (see Fishman, this issue), but rather reality today. For bringing the bilingual basics to life today is paving the way to a