

- Gee, J. (1996). *Social Linguistics and Literacies: Ideology in Discourses*. Philadelphia: Taylor and Francis.
- Goldenberg, C. (1991). *Instructional Conversations and their Classroom Application*. Santa Cruz, CA: National Center for Research on Cultural Diversity and Second Language Learning.
- Macedo, D.; and Bartolomé, L. (1999). *Dancing with Bigotry: Beyond the Politics of Tolerance*. New York: St. Martin's.
- MacSwan, J. (2000). The threshold hypothesis, semilingualism and other contributions to a deficit view of linguistic minorities. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences* 22(3), 3–45.
- Ramirez, J.D.; and Merino, B. (1990). Classroom talk in English immersion, early-exit and late-exit transitional bilingual education programs. In *Language Distribution Issues in Bilingual Schooling*, R. Jacobson and C. Faltis (eds.), 61–103. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Scarcella, R. (1999). *Academic English: A Conceptual Framework*. Santa Barbara, CA: University of California Language Minority Institute.
- Shannon, S. (1995). The hegemony of English: a case study of one bilingual classroom as a site of resistance. *Linguistics and Education* 7, 175–200.
- Tharp, R.; and Gallimore, R. (1991). *The Instructional Conversation: Teaching and Learning in Social Activity*. Santa Cruz, CA: National Center for Research on Cultural Diversity and Second Language Learning.
- ; and Gallimore, R. (1993). *Rousing Minds to Life: Teaching, Learning and Schooling in Social Context*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Wong-Fillmore, L.; and Snow, C. (1999). *What Educators — Especially Teachers — Need to Know About Language: The Bare Minimum*. Santa Barbara, CA: Language Minority Research Institute.

Comment

Teaching language minorities in the United States: From bilingualism as a deficit to bilingualism as a liability

OFELIA GARCÍA

Eugene Garcia's excellent integrative essay on bilingualism and schooling starts out by presenting what he calls the "portrait of educational vulnerability" ("Summary" to first section) of language-minority children in the United States. As Garcia so well summarizes, language-minority students in the United States have always been *vulnerable* to educational failure and their bilingualism most often seen by schools as a *deficit*.

But as Garcia points out, language minorities in the United States are quickly becoming a majority in our schools. As the states' educational agencies become cognizant of this phenomenon, regulations have been implemented to raise educational standards for *all* children, including those with language differences. The inclusion of language-minority students to gauge national educational success is clearly a vast improvement from their exclusion during a pre-Civil Rights era. Yet, we must be cautious that the more rigid educational and assessment policies that surround today's higher standards, as well as the higher stakes attached to the success of *all* children, do not obviate the flexibility needed to use the minority language in bilingual instruction in order to successfully educate the nation's language-minority students. In particular, the greater effort needed in helping English language learners (ELLs) meet the higher standards, coupled with their higher failure rate in meeting the standards, has made teaching them a *liability* for educators. And as the liability increases, many US bilingual educators, often blamed for the continued failure of language-minority students, have become cautious and timid in their support of bilingualism.

Eugene Garcia's important integrative essay must be analyzed as a product of our times, in which bilingualism in schools has gone from being a *deficit* to being a *liability*. Garcia clearly affirms the importance of linguistic and cultural diversity, and of the students' native language and culture. He concludes by saying, "It is clear that no research supports ignoring the language and culture of students" (final paragraph). His essay is important because it expands the localized and minority

perspective, treating the schooling of language-minority students as a subject of national importance and bringing it to center stage. But sometimes García falls prey to the new-standards movement in US education, giving up on the academic development of the students' minority language and focusing mostly on academic English as the sole valid outcome of educational achievement. This subtle shift in emphasis could escape the reader who has not followed Eugene García's excellent scholarship on the topic. But as someone who shares his last name and recently has been the other Dean García of a School of Education, I have been an avid consumer of García's articles and research over many years. I would wish that García would show in this essay greater support of bilingualism and biliteracy as worthy educational and social pursuits.

Eugene García proposes sociocultural theory as a way to find a unified understanding of language minorities' language, cognition, culture, human development, and teaching and learning. García says, "It is the recent linguistic, cognitive, and social discourse data related to multilingual populations that have transformed our focus on this population from purely attention to linguistic issues to issues that require an integrative conceptualization" (from "Summary" to the section on "Language of US bilinguals"). This is indeed a welcomed change. For the last thirty years, the US bilingual-education literature, often with a narrow focus on language itself, has dominated studies about the education of language-minority students. It is time to broaden the scope, to be more integrative as García has been, to be more inclusive. The danger, however, is that in broadening the scope we, as scholars, would lose what has hitherto been the non-negotiable characteristic of language-minority students — the minority language itself.

Although the abandonment of bilingualism and biliteracy as an educational goal for language-minority students might not have been the intent of Eugene García, it creeps up occasionally, and I will point to instances where I find the essay wanting.

Eugene García uses interchangeably almost all the terms that have been used in the United States to refer to linguistically diverse students: language minority (LM), linguistically and culturally diverse (LCD), culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD), English language learners (ELL), limited English proficient (LEP), bilingual (from the section on "The new US diversity"). But LMs, LCDs, and CLDs could be or could not be ELLs or LEPs. Truly bilingual students are not ELLs or LEP. By lumping all of the terms together without offering a critical analysis of the use of the terms or making appropriate distinctions of where these students are in the linguistic continuum between native proficiency in one language or the other, García blurs the social and educational

picture, focusing only on how to develop academic English proficiency of those who are English language learners, without regards to the variation created by the difference in linguistic characteristics, socioeconomic and immigration status, racial and ethnic characteristics, and sociohistorical relationship of the group with the United States. The minority language figures prominently among the tools García lists for optimal instruction and learning and in his guiding principles for a responsive pedagogy for this population. However, the minority language is often presented as important only as a tool to achieve academic English, and as if bilingualism and biliteracy could not be achieved.

García fails to distinguish between immigrant students who are ELLs and those who are not, between immigrant and native-language minority students who have differing ability in both the majority and the minority language. In fact, native-language minority students, a population that increasingly fails in the nation's schools, are almost forgotten in García's essay. This is revealed by his use of the adjective (in quotations) "foreign" to refer to the languages of speakers of languages other than English (from the end of the section on "The instructional staff"). By choosing "foreign" rather than the more neutral term, Languages Other than English (LOTEs), García may be signaling his support of English as the valid linguistic outcome of a US educational experience.

To my mind, the picture that Eugene García paints about the course taken by bilingual education in the new millennium is rosier than it should be. In "MYTH. Bilingual education means instruction mainly in students' native languages," García says, "Before 1994, the vast majority of US bilingual education programs were designed to encourage an early exit to mainstream English-language classrooms, while only a tiny fraction of programs were designed to maintain the native tongues of students" (p. 53). Although clearly the advent of dual-language programs or what García calls two-way immersion (TWI) programs is a welcomed improvement over transitional bilingual-education programs, one cannot say that TWI programs represent an advantage over more successful developmental maintenance programs, which were prevalent in the 1970s, or over other forms of enrichment bilingual education that continue to be found in elite and ethnic bilingual schools in the United States. In reporting the benefits of TWI programs for Spanish-speaking children in California, García reports that, contrary to the fears expressed by other researchers, Spanish speakers "maintain or improve their oral Spanish proficiency" (from "Two-way immersion programs"). García seems to be comfortable in having Latino students maintain only oral Spanish without regard to the development of literacy in Spanish, a skill that not only would be valuable in gaining greater insight into the

history, literature, and culture of Spanish speakers in the Americas, but that may be marketable in today's global economy and even in an increasingly Spanish-speaking United States.

Garcia's seemingly lack of interest in academic Spanish is also substantiated by the absence of the word biliteracy from his essay or of any mention of Hornberger's excellent scholarship on this topic. And yet, the section on "Authentic assessment" of writing clearly includes the students' native language as what Garcia calls "a means and an end of the writing assessment." It appears then that Garcia is committed to using the students' native language in instruction and assessment but only to gauge the progress in academic English.

Eugene Garcia seems to consider academic English as the only criterion, the only important variable worthy of study and of attention. In like fashion, the new educational-standards movement refuses to measure achievement other than in academic-English terms. For example, starting this year in New York State, all high school students must pass a rigorous two-day English language and literacy exam in order to graduate. And as educators scramble to help language-minority students pass the rigorous examination, less and less attention is paid to teaching academic content to language-minority students and less time is spent using the native language in instruction. In New York State, the term "bilingual education" starts to parallel the use of "bilingual student." That is, just as there is nothing bilingual about the student who is thus referred to, since s/he is usually an English language learner, there is nothing bilingual about the education. Bilingual education is rapidly becoming just the term to refer to the type of schooling, mostly in English and focusing exclusively on the development of academic English, which these "bilingual" students get.

It is clear that Eugene Garcia would not in any way support ignoring the minority language in the education of English language learners. But the danger of following only national and governmental guidelines, and of not clearly conceptualizing that different bilingual education models bring about different linguistic and educational outcomes is that it is easier to lose sight of the individual and societal benefits of bilingualism and biliteracy. In the section entitled, "Educational programs that serve these students," Eugene Garcia seems to suggest that the kind of program option does not make a difference. Listing transitional bilingual education, maintenance bilingual education, English-as-a-second language, immersion, sheltered English, submersion, he fails to differentiate among them. I was surprised that no effort was made to refer to other categorizations of models, especially those of Fishman, Baker, Hornberger, Skutnabb-Kangas, and my own categorizations that take

into account a broader international context. Only program types developed by the US Government Accounting Office are acknowledged by Eugene Garcia. This is precisely why no mention is made in the review of the many fine examples of enrichment bilingual education in elite and ethnic bilingual schools in the United States. The narrow focus on the United States and on the reality as given to us by governmental agencies is troubling for scholarship since it limits our ability to think critically. This is precisely what Eugene Garcia finds troubling with government-sponsored research, which he denounces in the section entitled "A responsive research agenda."

It is interesting, for example, that Eugene Garcia seems to view the issues surrounding the education of native American bilingual students as being different from those of Latino students. Indeed, most native American children have lost their indigenous languages, and efforts to educate them bilingually address issues of how to reverse their language shift. But for many US Latino students, the linguistic situation is similar to that of native American students, with language shift fully present. It has been said, for example, that dual-language programs, or two-way immersion programs, as Eugene Garcia calls them, play an important role in the reversal of language shift among Latino students, since in most cases the English speakers in the school are Latinos themselves.

The linguistic and cultural continuum of Latino students is clearly a lot more vast than that of Native Americans, all indigenous and having undergone serious language shift, but we must acknowledge that there are Latino students with very similar characteristics to those of Native Americans, who are also indigenous and/or US citizens and native speakers of English, and who have very high rates of failure in the nation's schools. It is because these Latino students continue to exist that we must insist on bilingualism and biculturalism as an enrichment educational option for Latinos.

It is also because the nation would benefit from a more bilingual and biliterate citizenry that we should ensure that enrichment bilingual-education programs continue to be a viable option, not only for our language minorities, native and immigrants, but also for our language majorities. And we should also insist that well-orchestrated enrichment bilingual-education programs produce not only the ability to use academic English in native ways to read critically and write expository and argumentative essays, as well as poetry, but also to do the same in other languages, penetrating deep into the heart, dreams, and markets of other cultures and enabling all of us to be citizens of the global world of the twenty-first century.

Of course, every reading is bound by the reader's culture and situation, and my interpretation of Eugene Garcia's essay is situated within the context of New York State, a leader in the nation's higher educational standards, and New York City, the most multilingual city in the country. In the section on "A responsive research agenda," Garcia himself says, "What works in El Paso may not work in Los Angeles, New York City or Miami." It could be that a scholar and researcher in California, in the aftermath of Proposition 227, which prohibits native-language instruction, must find ways to support bilingualism in gentler ways, without insisting on the individual and societal value of developing the minority language.

But as the avalanche against bilingualism in schools moves eastward, it is important for those of us who live in the multilingual city that reflects in its skyscrapers the past of Ellis Island and the future of the global market to be mindful of lessons learned from Joshua Fishman long ago. A quarter of a century ago, Fishman reminded us that bilingual education was good for education, good for language teaching, good for language minorities, and good for language majorities. We must continue to support bilingual education because it can add to the welfare of *all* our children, because it is a research-proven educational approach, because it will raise all of us to higher standards of learning, because it will connect us to our more narrow and intimate past and our more global future, because it will make all of us more knowledgeable and educated, more sensitive of differences. The deficit approach that produced US transitional bilingual-education models in the last thirty years has left us in a deep hole as a profession. To get out, it is important to look beyond the monocultural picture that hides our growing multiculturalism as a nation, beyond our monolingual society that silences our multilingual reality. Only by insisting on our multiculturalism and multilingualism as assets, and not deficiencies, will we begin to reclaim the benefits that all children who attend schools that truly develop bilingualism and biliteracy can reap.

Long Island University

KENJI HAKUTA

The length and scope of coverage in Eugene Garcia's very ambitious paper makes this assignment a daunting one to approach. He covers much ground, exploring many standard dimensions of the social sciences: macro vs. micro, past vs. present, individual vs. group, cognitive vs. social, theory vs. practice, theory vs. policy, majority vs. minority. So as not to get lost in a maze of information overload, I must choose an anchor. Thus, I will address problems from the vantage point of a particular hat that I wear at the moment of this writing, as a policymaker with responsibility to develop priorities and standards in the arena of educational research in the United States. Through that lens, I hope to shed some perspective on the specific opportunities that might exist in the immediate future for research in the education of language-minority students.

Perspective

Since 1995, I have been chair of the National Educational Research Policy and Priorities Board (NERPPB) of the US Department of Education. The Board is responsible for developing research priorities and setting standards for the quality of research and educational programs supported by the Department of Education.

One of the main challenges for educational research in the United States is that it lacks credibility as a science. This unfortunate condition is correlated with the low status of schools of education within research universities as well as the low status of education as a profession (Lagemann 2000). Educational research is seen as guided by democratic and craft principles rather than scientific principles, rarely getting to the point where randomized trial experiments are attempted (Cook 1999). Because it is not guided by strong theories and principles, it is scattershot — a mile wide, an inch deep. And because there is no strong methodological paradigm, quality control is haphazard.