

# The official language



With the large population of Spanish speaking people in American, questions about the feasibility of Bilingualism in both education and politics has become a major issue in our country. ??? Bilingualism is the use of two or more languages in places of work or educational facilities, according each language equal legitimacy.??? (Schafer, 2006 pg 242) In terms of education, what it means is that should we have schools teaching lessons in more than one language, so that children who may not speak English are learning lessons in their native tongue while at the same time learning English. Although in a perfect world, the English speaking students would ideally be learning a second language as well but this usually isn't the case. Everyone seems to have an opinion, and there doesn't seem to be a middle ground. Bilingualism doesn't just affect the Educational world; there are also issues with it in the Political world.

The question is whether ethnical political issues, from multi-lingual ballots to ethnic minority policies should be front and center in the political region. To further learn about these issues I studied several articles on the subject. The first was an article on Education.com called ??? Bilingual Education Attacked.

??? This article written by D. E. Campbell looks at the destruction of the bilingualism educational movement in America. From the passing of California's Proposition 227, which made it illegal in California to teach instructional courses in any language other than English, to expiration of the Bilingual Education Act, it seems that there is a large portion of the population who fear bilingual learning.

The article points out that opponents of bilingual education attempt to create a sense of fear that teaching in more than one language will give minorities an unfair advantage and that it must be stopped to preserve American Culture and a sense of American unity. The author feels that decades of attempting bilingual education has ended and the anti-bilingual movement has won. The only glimmer of hope remaining for bilingual education seems to rest in the hands of individual schools who, because they are required to meet the needs of all of their students, have found loop holes to help non-English speaking students maintain some form of bilingualism in their education. (Campbell, 2006-2010). Next, I read ??? Bilingual Education - Need for Bilingual Education, Benefits of Bilingualism and Theoretical Foundations of Bilingual Education,??? at stateuniversity. com. This article gives some of the history of bilingual education in America and talks about some of the benefits of a bilingual educational system.

It basically says that it should be basic common sense that a bilingual education system should exist. Obviously children will not be able to succeed in their education if they don't understand the source material due to a language barrier. This leads to a much higher dropout rate among non-English speaking students.

The article further states that what laws remain about bilingual education have become a state issue and approximately 34 states have adopted laws that state instruction will take place in English. (Stateuniversity. com, 2010). As I said earlier, bilingualism isn't just an educational issue it is also a political one. Voting rights and bilingual ballots have been a major issues in the modern history of our country. In an article from Fox News entitled ???

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House Supports Bilingual Ballots in 31 States??? I learned that the question of placing multi lingual ballots in areas of the country with higher concentrations of Hispanic Americans was highly contested. The word bilingual can be confused with or synonymous with the word immigrant.

There was a great fear by some that creating bilingual ballots was not only costly, but it would allow illegal immigrants to vote. Proponents of the bill eventually were able to get it passed and correctly asserted that having bilingual ballots didn't give illegal immigrants the ability to vote but it did help legal citizens exercise the right to vote. It was about stacking the playing field; it was about making the playing field fair. (Associated Press, 2010). What I have discovered as I have researched this topic is that politics and education can become mashed together in these questions and debates.

Many politicians use the issues of immigration and bilingualism for their own causes and misdirections. Take Newt Gingrich for example. In a Fox news article entitled ??? Newt Gingrich Decries Ghetto Nature of Bilingual Education??? a political campaign and bilingual education became victims in a head on collision. The former speaker of the house equated bilingualism with a deadly plague.

Not only did he suggest that voting ballots shouldn't be printed in any other language other than English, he also proclaimed that, Associated Press (2010), ??? bilingualism poses ??? long term dangers to the fabric of our nation?? and that ??? allowing bilingualism to continue to grow is very dangerous.?? (Para 6). I think his rather misguided point is that we wouldn't need the multilingual voting ballots with we didn't have

bilingual education and if we federally made English our official language. His theory also included the notion that since an American history test, which is given in English, is required to become an American citizen then why should we need to provide bilingual services.

Doing so would only support illegal immigrants, who haven't earned the right to vote or are entitled to public school education. (Associated Press, 2010). I see why this topic can lead to heated debate.

Like I said there seems to be no middle ground, and when a topic forces people to such extreme views it is bound to become a very aggressive conversation. I think it is important to remember that bilingualism isn't just an educational or political topic, it is a human topic. There are people's education, futures and life's at stake in the debate. There are no easy answers and there will always be people who oppose that which they fear, and as the white minority is learning as their number lessen and become more balanced is that all the people of our country must be cared for, not just the ones who are convenient and look like you.

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