

# Essay summary of bilingual education

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This essay will attempt to answer two questions about bilingual education programs. These questions are: (1) What is the basis or belief of a transitional or a maintenance approach of most bilingual education programs? (2) Why are children from culturally and linguistically different backgrounds overrepresented in classes for children with disabilities and underrepresented in classes for children who are gifted or talented and what can be done to reverse this trend?

First, the basis or belief of a transitional or a maintenance approach of bilingual education programs are explained separately below: (a) Marshall, Lieb, De Morais & Saavedra (2008) defines transitional bilingual education as a system of instruction which “ uses students' native languages in teaching subject areas, and students use progressively more English to transit into the mainstream education curriculum.

” It is based on the belief that “ the first language can be helpful in providing background knowledge, and literacy transfers across languages” (Shin, 2000, cited in Marshall, Lieb, De Morais & Saavedra). This approach aims “ to enable limited English proficient students to become competent in all areas of English through the development of literacy and academic skills in their native language” and “ to place students in the mainstream English class as soon as possible” (Marshall, Lieb, De Morais & Saavedra, 2008).

(b) Maintenance or developmental bilingual education, according to Vandergriff (2002) aims “ to preserve and enhance students' skills in their mother tongue while they acquire a second language” and it “ is considered an enrichment model, adding to students' linguistic abilities or additive bilingualism, continuing the development in both languages. ”

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Moreover, Cromwell (1998) adds that “ developmental bilingual education attempts to build on students' skills in their native language as they learn English as a second language.

” It is based on the belief that students can learn more by the languages they have known and learned. Second, the reason why children who come from culturally and linguistically different backgrounds are overrepresented in classes for children with disabilities and underrepresented in classes for gifted or talented children is due to the lack or deficiency of English language skills of these children which causes them not to learn the subjects in a certain grade level and causes them to fail in their academic performance.

These children might have been placed in classes for children with disabilities because they are like them who repeatedly fail in their academics because of language barriers. The Washington State Transitional Bilingual Instruction Program Guidelines (2008) state that: “ Students who are not proficient in English sometimes are inappropriately placed in special education classes... because of their lack of English proficiency, qualified students often do not have access to high track courses or Gifted and Talented programs” (p.

25). Indeed, this is what is happening in reality. If a student lacks the language proficiency to learn in academic subjects such as math, science, history and others, s/he is likely to fail and repeat the subjects. The child then becomes similar to a child with disability in terms of academic performance. It can be said that there are many gifted or talented students among the students from different cultural and linguistic background yet

they are not able to demonstrate their gifts or special talents due to language barriers.

In order to stop the trend where there are more Limited English Proficiency (LEP) students in special education classes and less English language learners (ELL) in classes for gifted or talented children, the bilingual education program of the state and the nation as a whole needs to be fully implemented in every district where there are LEP and EL learners. In this way, those students who are not proficient or lacks proficiency in the English language may be proficient at it which could lead these students to understand, learn and pass other academic subjects which are taught in English.

Consequently, there will be more children from culturally and linguistically different backgrounds can have access to classes for children who are gifted and talented. References Bergeson, T. (2008 February). Washington State Transitional Bilingual Instruction Program Guidelines. Retrieved 11 May 2008 from <http://www.k12.wa.us/MigrantBilingual/pubdocs/TBIPProgramGuidelines.pdf>. Cromwell, S. (1998). The Bilingual Education Debate: Part I.

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