

The major issues and conflicts on bilingual education

[Education](#)



Bilingual education was first initiated in 1968. It was a new means to educate the children who spoke a minority language. thirty-one years later the same problems exist for those children who speak a language other than English. The experiment of Bilingual education has been a failure and now it's time to move on. The first English only initiatives were brought forth in 1981 by newly elected president Reagan. Since then the conflict over Bilingual education has driven on.

Currently twenty-three states have "English Only" laws with 4 states having laws that are pending. The issue of bilingual education and the conflict that surrounds it is primarily focused between whites and Hispanics, although since the mid 70's it's also been involved with the Chinese and Mexican cultures. Bilingual education has failed however, currently the movement is towards an English only educational system. The simple fact of the matter is that people who speak a language in this country will never get ahead.

We've tested the ignorant notion that you could get by without speaking English; or speaking English very minimally, but that's promoting and even more ignorant idea which is that you don't need speak English fluently to succeed in America. In 1968 we didn't know that Bilingual Education wouldn't work, however, it's time to move on and do the right thing and switch to English Only. Lyndon Johnson was president, we had the futile dream of world peace, at the same time we were "Bombing the North Vietnamese into the stone-age".

In the final year of LBJ's presidency several new education initiatives were taken as part of the last step in his "Great Society" programs. One of these new

initives was Bilingual education. At the time it was supported by the Liberal whites in this country, for the most part the conservative Hispanic sect was opposed to such measures. The idea at the time was, kids would learn in their native language and simply pick up English gradually. Those ideas were radicalized in the 1970's however, the premise moved away from gradual learning of English; to English wasn't really necessary.

In 1981 Bilingual education came under assault from newly elected president Reagan proposed moving to the English Only system. The idea wasn't viewed as Anti-Hispanic at the time, or as some kind of racist proposal. Reagan was adored by a majority of the Hispanic community, drawing unprecedented support among Latino voters. The issue of bigotry wasn't brought forth until the Democrats were sent packing in Gingrich revolution of 1994. In 1999 the debate rages on another 4-5 states are preparing for an "English Only" law to go on the 2000 Election ballots.

The assault on Bilingual Education will continue on. There have been several attempts to put an "English Only" amendment in to the constitution, all have failed. However, as public support for English only hits record highs an amendment maybe inevitable. The latest of the states to abolish Bilingual education was the state of California; not exactly a conservative state by any means. The controversial Prop 227 was passed by a significantly wide margin 61% to 39%.

Prop. 227 was headed by Millionaire computer executive Ron Unz himself the son of immigrant parents. During the battle to pass Prop 227 Unz was called everything from a sell out to a White supremacist. The surrounding Bilingual

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education is now fueled by a Hispanic minority that refuse to adapt to American culture. They refuse to see the facts, Americans who do not speak English fluently have a poverty rate nearly 25% higher than Americans who speak fluent English.

Their arguments are unsubstantiated, English only laws are not racist in nature. They're attempting to create a better equality theory that you simply cannot call racist. By making children of parents who speak a minority language speak English, the people who are really benefiting are the children. By allowing children to think it's perfectly ok to use their native languages in our society is promoting ignorance and poverty. America is run in English, twenty-four states publish all their information in nothing but English.

To say that speaking another language and knowing very little English will get you anywhere in this country is stupid. Diversity is wonderful, however, it belongs in homes and not in our schools. American culture is speaking English and only English. America was formed on certain principles laid out with certain fundamental underlying assumptions, it always wasn't possible for everyone to speak English, but the concept was that this is America and we speak English here. There are basically five arguments coming from opponents of English only education.

They say it ignores our country's civil rights tradition; it fails to promote the integration of minority citizens into the American mainstream; it neglects the need for American merchants to be able to communicate with foreign markets; it restricts the ability of the Government to be able to reach all its

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citizens; as well as it raises constitutional concerns. The main supporters economically of Bilingual Education are the educators. The NEA and various other education groups spent nearly twice as much money trying to defeat Prop 227 in California than the groups supporting the initiative spent.

Why would they do this? It's simple, MONEY, Bilingual education creates jobs for teachers and valued funding, no matter how right something is, teachers simply don't turn against teachers. The thousands of positions bilingual education has created are now being eliminated. The only way they can preserve these jobs is by claiming that English only legislation is racially motivated and instills hostility towards minority groups who use another language other than English.

I'm firmly in favor of English only. First, Bilingual education does not ignore our country's civil rights tradition. It's simply stating that if you want to be ignorant, live in poverty, collect welfare and detract from society, that's fine but you will do it on our terms. To say America also has a civil rights tradition is also questionable. Is this not the country where slavery was permitted for 300 years, where women couldn't vote, and where abortions are readily available.

People's civil rights are being infringed on all the time, from a black slave to an unborn baby, there is no tradition of great civil rights in America. The second argument, it fails to provide integration of minority citizens into the mainstream is ridiculous. What's more mainstream American a new Chinese immigrant speaking Chinese or one speaking English? The notion that

allowing someone to speak a native language, is bringing them in to the mainstream is insane.

Third, it doesn't neglect the American Government from reaching it's citizens. This is AMERICA we're associated with English, we speak English, Thomas Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence in English, our laws are passed in English. Maybe if you can't speak our language you don't belong in our country. It's also not the Government's duty to reach out to the citizens, people are suppose to be self reliant, we don't want the Government to reach into our lives. That's why we had that little revolution against King George.

If you really need the Government's assistance you should reach out to them, something that would be pretty hard if you don't speak English.

Fourth, it does not neglect the ability of merchants to interact with foreign markets. We were dealing with foreigners a long time before Bilingual education and we will be doing so a long time after it's elimination.

Translators! Now that's a noble idea, more practical then allowing 300 languages to exist. It's also cheaper. Finally, our Constitution is written in English and since 1908 printed exclusively in English by the United States Government.

Teddy Roosevelt said in 1908 that " To print the American Constitution in any other language but English, would be like spitting in the face of our forefathers". The Untied States Supreme Court has also ruled numerous times that English only laws do not violate the 1st amendment of our Constitution. I personally believe that in our nation there needs to be a main

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language, not 3 or 4 or 1200. George Washington wasn't giving orders at Valley Forge in Russian he was speaking English. Abe Lincoln didn't give the Gettysburgh Address in Portuguese.

It's not too much to ask for every American citizen to be able to speak English fluently. No one is forced to live here, and if you refuse to adapt you probably shouldn't be living here. If you want to speak German by all means go ahead and do so, but do it back in Germany. While you're in America however, we speak English, and if you don't know it you're in trouble. The conflict is over rated. It's not a matter of racism or of any other kind of hatred. It's a simple matter of principle. Americans speak English it's not too much to ask.