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### La Necesidad de Bilingual Education en los Estados Unidos: Its Benefits for Students, Immigrants, and the American Mindset, with a Practical Focus on Knox County Schools

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Hispanic Studies and History

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*La Necesidad de Bilingual Education en los Estados Unidos: Its Benefits for Students,  
Immigrants, and the American Mindset, with a Practical Focus on Knox County Schools*

Chancellor's Honors Program Thesis Project

The University of Tennessee - Knoxville

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*Estableciendo el Escenario*

It is mid-September, 1787. Fifty-five delegates, including many of whom are considered to be Founding Fathers of a new nation of people, have dedicated months to debating, discussing, and meticulously analyzing every word of a document that would soon be crafted into the Supreme Law of a novel group of people, the Constitution of the United States of America. Yet, in all that time and intelligent word crafting, not a phrase is designated to declare an official language of this new country, even though it is written and discussed in English. This begs the question, why is this identifying factor of an official English language not included? Certainly it must have been discussed in such a significant meeting of men laying out the foundation of a newly united nation. In fact, just a few years earlier in 1780, John Adams actually proposed creating an official state academy for the English language in the U.S. However, his idea “was rejected at the time as undemocratic,”<sup>1</sup> further giving evidence to the intentional abstinence of declaring English as the country’s official language in the Constitution. Nevertheless, this is a question that remains polemical in the United States to this day, well over two hundred years since the Constitution was constructed and ratified.<sup>2</sup>

*Introducción al Tema*

There are many theories and arguments that support various politically charged opinions on the topic of an official English language of the United States of America. Today, the United States remains undeclared in the realm of official languages, even

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<sup>1</sup> Steve Mount, “Constitutional Topic: Official Language,” *USConstitution.net*, 24 Jan 2010.

<sup>2</sup> Steve Mount, “Constitutional Topic.”

though an amendment attempting to declare English as the country's official language has been proposed "almost every session of Congress."<sup>3</sup> However, that is still not to say that English is not promoted as the majority, should-be-official tongue by many, and that other languages are not put down as harmful to the American identity and/or inferior to English. This can be seen most evidently in the manifestations of pro-English, anti-immigrant language public education policies that are passed by both local and federal legislatures. These policies are passed often "in response to legislation recognizing non-English languages in public discourse of some kind," such as the Bilingual Education Act, "which authorized funds to educate American students if their native tongue as well as to provide specialized training in the learning of English."<sup>4</sup>

However, dating back to the Civil Rights Era especially, there has been a movement that has ebbed and flowed in its prominence with a goal to better integrate and cater to immigrant non-English populations in United States public education. This waning and waning of support and interest in these minority linguistic groups in U.S. schools is largely a result of inconclusive and inconsistent research on the best way to instruct non-English speaking students, leading to either side claiming there is research invalidating the other's. However, yet again, much of the opposition to bilingual education comes from the lenses of a socio-political light.

The goal of this work is to detail the polemic nature of bilingual education in the United States, elaborating upon its political history, analyzing various theories published, and refuting many misconceptions surrounding this topic. It will then commence to argue that implementing a bilingual education plan for elementary students in United States

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<sup>3</sup> Steve Mount, "Constitutional Topic."

<sup>4</sup> Steve Mount, "Constitutional Topic."

public schools will produce great benefits for our nation by improving students' academic and mental growth and success, thus fostering a new generation of American youths with enhanced perspectives of the world outside of the United States, while further creating a more inclusive culture for non-English speaking immigrants. The work will then expand upon this theory to detail and propose a plan for implementation of a specific dual-bilingual program in the Knox County Schools District in Knoxville, Tennessee.

*Una Breve Historia de la Educación Bilingüe en los Estados Unidos*

In order to understand where the U.S. stands now in regards to bilingual education and the attitudes towards it, it is first necessary to detail where it has been. Picking up where the introduction to this work left off, the United States of its first few decades of existence was clearly dominated by the English tongue as its commonest form of communication. However, British colonists who became the earliest U.S. citizens also shared this title of being the first Americans with “many Dutch and a lesser number of French, Germans and Swedes, who brought their native languages with them.”<sup>5</sup> Even though not considered citizens at the time, African slaves brought many more languages to American soil, and earlier still before English arrived in colonial times, many Native American languages were widely spoken as the primary tongues in the lands of North America. Even more linguistic diversity was added into the sea of tongues spoken in the U.S. through the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, “with conquests of the Mexican-American War (Spanish), the import of Chinese labor (Mandarin and Cantonese) and the immigration

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<sup>5</sup> Kenneth Jost, “Bilingual Education vs. English Immersion,” *CQ Researcher* 19(43), (Dec., 2009): 1029-1052. Retrieved from <http://library.cqpress.com/>

from southern and eastern Europe (Italian, Greek, Portuguese, Russian and Polish)” as well as other smaller European languages.<sup>6</sup>

Interestingly enough, most of these non-English speaking immigrants who received an education reaped the benefits of having at least part of their instruction conducted in their native tongues through the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Even more interesting is that opposition to using non-English languages in both public and private education did not arise until the acquisition of new territories. These oppositions then truly gained strength with the growing globalization of the world and diminishing isolationism of the U.S. in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>7</sup> At this point, the U.S. created both significant adversaries and allies for itself, which eventually incited a development of xenophobic sentiments and a fear of compromise of American identity, further paving the path for hatred of non-American appearing ideals. More specifically, these sentiments emerged largely with middle to late 19<sup>th</sup> century European immigration, then even more-so after strong anti-German feelings arose during and following the first World War, even leading to “English-only laws in the Midwest in states with large German populations.”<sup>8</sup>

These international interactions essentially led to ideals that “drove native-language instruction out of most public schools.”<sup>9</sup> Throughout the 1920s, many states passed laws mandating that English alone were to be permitted to be the language of instruction in public schools, and that all others were to be forbidden. This became extrapolated to result in discipline of immigrant students for speaking their native tongues colloquially, especially when it came to Mexican-American students in the mid-20<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Kenneth Jost, “Bilingual Education vs. English Immersion.”

<sup>7</sup> Kenneth Jost, “Bilingual Education vs. English Immersion.”

<sup>8</sup> Kenneth Jost, “Bilingual Education vs. English Immersion.”

<sup>9</sup> Kenneth Jost, “Bilingual Education vs. English Immersion.”

century.<sup>10</sup> These behaviors and discriminatory policies towards low English proficiency immigrants were widely accepted up until they were first challenged and labeled as cruelly discriminatory during President Lyndon B. Johnson's term in office in the Civil Rights Era of the 1960s.<sup>11</sup>

The first gains in equalizing opportunities for non-English proficient immigrant students came indirectly through the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), which was passed 1965.<sup>12</sup> However, a great victory was won directly for immigrant public school students with the clearing of the Bilingual Education Act by Congress in 1967. This law essentially was just one of funding allocations, specifically calling for "up to 85 million in federal aid for bilingual education" to be distributed to public school districts with high populations of students exhibiting limited English knowledge.<sup>13</sup> Even though the Bilingual Education Act was a huge leap in progress for granting funding in support of bilingual education, it did not define any sort of program or method of bilingual instruction for which the funds should be allocated to support. Ultimately, this would lead to controversy in the following decades and up until the present day on what the most effective instructional techniques and programs should be to best cater to the needs of low English proficiency public school students through utilizing the federal funds made available for these programs.

Since the authorization of the ESEA and the Bilingual Education Act, both state and federal legislators have had an impact on the progress of catering to non-English

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<sup>10</sup> Kenneth Jost, "Bilingual Education vs. English Immersion."

<sup>11</sup> Kenneth Jost, "Bilingual Education vs. English Immersion."

<sup>12</sup> Eliane C. Condon, "Bilingual Education: A Survey of Background Information," *System*, 2(2):16-32, 18.

<sup>13</sup> Kenneth Jost, "Bilingual Education vs. English Immersion."

speaking students' needs. In the 1970s, legislators generally leaned towards policies that sought to improve upon the ambiguity of what was a good bilingual program. This came through pilot experiments, such as Massachusetts creating a law that implemented the first state wide transitional bilingual program in all its public schools, and also through legal regulations such as those enforced by the Office of Civil Rights which went as far as "requiring use of non-English languages for language minority students."<sup>14</sup>

Statistically, it seems as if the more immigrants that came to the U.S. in these decades, the greater the support for them became. Between the years 1968 and 1972, the number of first-generation immigrants living in the U.S. increased from around three and a half million to nearly five and a half million.<sup>15</sup>

Yet, as the fervor that followed the Civil Rights Era slowed in the late 70s, old conservative thought began to reemerge as some research studies made claims that questioned the effectiveness of teaching students in a bilingual setting.<sup>16</sup> Soon to follow, in the 1980s, the Reagan Administration cut funds to both English-language instruction and oversight of bilingual programs. Even more extreme, an organization called U.S. English soon began striving publicly to convince legislators to pass laws making English the official language of each state.<sup>17</sup> Many states go on to approve laws that do just that in the late 1970s through the 1990s.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Kenneth Jost, "Bilingual Education vs. English Immersion."

<sup>15</sup> "Table IV," *U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Services, 1972 Annual Report*, (cited in Eliane C. Condon, "Bilingual Education: A Survey of Background Information," *System*, 2(2), 16-32), 17.

<sup>16</sup> Kenneth Jost, "Bilingual Education vs. English Immersion."

<sup>17</sup> Steve Mount, "Constitutional Topic."

<sup>18</sup> Kenneth Jost, "Bilingual Education vs. English Immersion."



Progress has only diminished further from the turn of the millennium through the present day. Many states continue to pass English-only instruction laws, making it illegal to facilitate any sort of bilingual program in public schools. Federally, the Bush Administration's signing of the No Child Left Behind Act repealed and replaced the Bilingual Education Act in 2002. This act acknowledged that accountability for low English proficiency student instruction is important, and that the best way to measure this is through testing English proficiency to pass these students as having sufficient English academic ability as rapidly as possible.<sup>19</sup> This has only discouraged the utilization of bilingual programs, for this evaluation system does not take into account cognitive or subject matter knowledge in the native language, but the speed at which proficient English speaking ability and standardized testing ability in English are attained as the major unit of measurement of a successful program.<sup>20</sup> The disunity of what to test with low English proficiency students to measure progress is one large problem that continues to produce conflicting research findings both for and against bilingual instruction to this day.

### *Definiciones de los Términos Más Importantes*

Now that the background and history of bilingual education in the United States has been surveyed, before analyzing the polemics surrounding these programs, it is first necessary to define the most common of various terms and abbreviations that will be

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<sup>19</sup> Kenneth Jost, "Bilingual Education vs. English Immersion."

<sup>20</sup> "Tennessee English as a Second Language Program Guide," *State of Tennessee Department of Education*, Section 1.17.

utilized throughout the rest of this work.<sup>21</sup> First of all, the phrase, bilingual education, deserves an in depth description before going forward. Eliane Condon describes it well as a type of academic program which

Consists of instruction in two languages, one of which is English as a Second Language, and the other is the native language of the pupils. It also includes a cultural component, whereby students are taught about the history and culture of their own civilization, as well as those of their adopted country – the U.S.A.<sup>22</sup>

Or more simply, it can be described as “teaching non-English-speaking people in both their native language and in English.”<sup>23</sup> There are many academic terms that use the word *bilingual* in them, including bilingual learner, bilingual teacher, bilingualism, etc. Each of these should be interpreted as a modifier to the noun which makes it mean essentially something which involves speaking two different languages, though not always with the same level of proficiency in both. Biculturalism is similar, in that it relates to being able “to function in two cultures, though not necessarily with equal proficiency.”<sup>24</sup>

There are many terms that describe both students who are not native speakers of English and also the programs into which they are entered. English Language Learner, or ELL, is now one of the most common titles to refer to a student by that is learning English as a second language. There is an actual branch of programs that takes the name, English as a Second Language, or ESL, however, which “refers to non-English speakers and programs designed to teach them English.”<sup>25</sup> Another term that refers to students

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<sup>21</sup> For a more diverse assortment of bilingual education terms and theories, see Worsnop, Richard L., “Bilingual Education: Which Programs Should the Clinton Administration Support?” *CQ Researcher* 3(30), (1993), 1-20 and Rebecca Harris, “Caught Between Two Languages,” *Catalyst Chicago*, (Oct. 2012), 57-62.

<sup>22</sup> Eliane C. Condon, “Bilingual Education: A Survey,” 18.

<sup>23</sup> Kenneth Jost, “Bilingual Education vs. English Immersion.”

<sup>24</sup> Eliane C. Condon, “Bilingual Education: A Survey,” 19.

<sup>25</sup> Kenneth Jost, “Bilingual Education vs. English Immersion.”

learning English is Limited English Proficiency, or LEP, which refers in general to “individuals who cannot communicate effectively in English.”<sup>26</sup> Using a similar description, the term, DLL, stands for Dual Language Learner, which refers to students who are learning academically in at least two languages at the same time, “or are continuing to master their first language” while learning their second in school.<sup>27</sup>

On the opposite end of bilingual programs are English Immersion programs, which can be defined as programs in which instruction to ELLs is conducted almost completely in English, effectively eliminating any academic nurturing of the students’ native tongue.<sup>28</sup> There are many variations of immersion programs, such as Sheltered English Immersion and Structured English Immersion. Early Exit Transitional is a pseudo mix of bilingual education, as its goal is to “help students develop English skills as quickly as possible,” beginning “with instruction in the native language and then move[ing] rapidly to English.”<sup>29</sup> These are arguably the most common programs utilized in public schools for their adherence to English Language Proficiency (ELP) Standards, which are used “to evaluat[e] LEP students’ progress in their acquisition of English” and to balance LEP students’ English progress with general academic progress for their grades as well.<sup>30</sup> It is upon these tests of proficiency and progress that school districts are granted their government funds, so these evaluations are incredibly important to school administration, arguably more so than their students’ long term success.

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<sup>26</sup> Kenneth Jost, “Bilingual Education vs. English Immersion.”

<sup>27</sup> Linda M. Espinosa, “Challenges and Benefits of Early Bilingualism in the United States’ Context,” *Global Education Review* 2(1), (2015): 40-53, 40.

<sup>28</sup> Kenneth Jost, “Bilingual Education vs. English Immersion.”

<sup>29</sup> Kenneth Jost, “Bilingual Education vs. English Immersion.”

<sup>30</sup> Kenneth Jost, “Bilingual Education vs. English Immersion.”

*La Polémica*

Next, now that the lingo surrounding the various bilingual education programs and classifications have been clarified, the arguments both for and against bilingual education can be detailed and assessed. The basic polar ends of the argument can be simplified down to this: *Bilingual Instruction vs. English Immersion*. These two staple instruction theories encompass a vast amount of variations that generally fall more heavily under one or the other, some of which were defined earlier in this work. These two ends of the debate, however, are heavily contested, and much research has been produced which publish claims that the other is ineffective. A large difficulty in these research studies, however, is that *what is successful* in a program is not deemed the same for both sides.

Much of the time, academic growth and proficiency in a dual language learner's first language (that is one other than English) is not tested for, as achievement tests are standardized and conducted solely in English.<sup>31</sup> If this continues to be the case, many DLLs and ELLs will continue to be misclassified as underperforming, and on top of that, any of these that are bilingual program students will produce unreliable data for the success of the bilingual programs they are enrolled in. This data will continue to be unreliable because the assessments do not consider cognitive or subject matter growth in the learners' first languages. This is often a principal goal of many bilingual programs, to nurture the students' learning growth through building a strong foundation in their home languages, while adding significant nourishment and instruction in English as well. However, in the most commonly facilitated English-only approaches, the students must

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<sup>31</sup> Linda M. Espinosa, "Challenges and Benefits," 43.

learn English as quickly as possible in order to keep up, with the only external assistance being potentially “some English as a second language (ESL) instruction, individually or in small groups, to promote rapid acquisition of enough English to comprehend English instruction.”<sup>32</sup> Yet, long-term studies have shown that

In all published studies in which these conditions [conditions that qualify a program as properly bilingual] are met, bilingual education is a winner. Children in bilingual programs acquire more of the second language than those in all-English programs (Mortensen, 1984), even eventually doing as well as native speakers of English (de la Garza and Medina, 1985; Burnham-Massey and Pina, 1990)<sup>33</sup>

Thus, the argument that English immersion programs are more successful than bilingual ones is often conducted with a limited lens of analysis, looking only at the rate at which English proficiency is reached to deem which programs are best. This is just not the aim of most bilingual programs. English fluency will happen for students living in a popularly Anglo-American society. Trying to drown LEP students in English will only inhibit their cognitive and academic growth, when they truly need nurturing in the way they are learning and what they are learning more than in which language they are learning it all in.

### *La Refutación de los Mitos y Conceptos Erróneos Populares*

There are many deeply held opinions that are misled about bilingualism in children in the United States that sometimes are even backed up by scientific research.

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<sup>32</sup> Linda M. Espinosa, “Challenges and Benefits,” 48.

<sup>33</sup> Stephen Krashen, “Bilingual Education: Arguments For and (Bogus) Arguments Against,” *Georgetown University Roundtable on Languages and Linguistics* May 6, 1999. Retrieved from <http://www.languagepolicy.net/archives/Krashen3.htm>

However, often this research is either conducted without consideration of factors other than what were tested upon or is just outdated by more recent research that has not become popularly known or discussed yet. The first misconception this work will seek to clarify is that early ELL, LEP, and DLL students, (i.e. those who do not speak English as a first language), are cognitively at a disadvantage to students who have grown up learning English only, both at home and at school. This misconception leads to popular opinions that this disadvantage is due to these students' bilingual or multilingual childhoods thus far, and that the solution is to catch them up to their English only pupils as quickly as possible through English-only immersion or transitory programs.<sup>34</sup>

However, this opinion is also held without the support of research for some people. That is, a reason this belief is held can sometimes be a result of stereotyping. More specifically, this is a side effect of "the human tendency to misinterpret individual behaviors on the basis of cultural stereotypes."<sup>35</sup>

This view that growing up bilingual causes learning delays is actually backed by recent research studies, but these investigations and assessments published often disregard linguistic or cultural elements that detract from the data's effectiveness. For example, many of these assessments "are administered only in English," and do not consider the students' academic achievement and intelligence in other languages or their cultural or social intelligence.<sup>36</sup> Thus, although it is true that "some features of DLLs' language development may look like speech or language delays," and that they have smaller vocabularies in each language than monolinguals have in their own language, this

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<sup>34</sup> Linda M. Espinosa, "Challenges and Benefits," 43.

<sup>35</sup> Eliane C. Condon, "Bilingual Education: A Survey," 30.

<sup>36</sup> Linda M. Espinosa, "Challenges and Benefits," 43.

is a result of their brains having a more complex system of processing language, furthermore that “these differences are temporary and disappear as young DLLs become more proficient in both of their languages.”<sup>37</sup>

Another widely held misconception about bilingual education is that it is ineffective, expensive, and unnecessary.<sup>38</sup> As for being expensive for the state government, long-term research studies have indicated that “through the elimination of costly grade retention, remedial instruction, and drop-out prevention,” the state actually would save money long term through the facilitation of good bilingual education programs in its elementary schools.<sup>39</sup> As for the necessity of good bilingual programs, statistically speaking, in Tennessee, Hispanic students only have an 80.5% graduation rate, over 10% lower than that of White students and the second lowest over all compared with other ethnicities, with African Americans being the only group with a lower rate at 79.1%. That does not even take into account Hispanics that are LEP classified, whose graduation rate is even lower at 71.8%, which is lower even than students who are classified as possessing learning or physical disabilities, whose percentage is 72.8%.<sup>40</sup>

Thus, it is reasonable to conclude that if only two-thirds of LEP students are graduating high school, the current ESL and English Immersion programs in Tennessee are not effective enough, therefore revealing a necessity for bilingual programs. As for those who make claims that bilingual programs would not help this statistic rise, “the only empirical study of the impact of bilingual education on dropouts, Curiel, Rosenthal,

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<sup>37</sup> Linda M. Espinosa, “Challenges and Benefits,” 45-46.

<sup>38</sup> Eliane C. Condon, “Bilingual Education: A Survey,” 30.

<sup>39</sup> Eliane C. Condon, “Bilingual Education: A Survey,” 30.

<sup>40</sup> “Attendance, Promotion, Dropout, and Graduation,” *Tennessee Department of Education*,  
<http://edu.reportcard.state.tn.us/pls/apex/f?p=200:50:845565273921052::NO>

and Richek (1986), reported fewer dropouts among bilingual education students than among comparison students.”<sup>41</sup>

*Los Beneficios Mentales, Académicos, y Culturales del Aprendizaje de Dos Idiomas y su Significancia*

As a result of “the implementation of the Tennessee Diploma Project in 2009,” two credits of foreign language courses are required for all Tennessee high school students.<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, in order to receive a Bachelor of Arts degree at the University of Tennessee at Knoxville, 6 hours of intermediate-level foreign language courses are required for students in the College of Arts and Sciences.<sup>43</sup> Thus, it is obviously important to learn a foreign language in the perspective of the state of Tennessee if it is requiring its high school students and a significant percentage of one of its largest state university’s attendees to take foreign language courses. If it is important to Tennessee that its public school youth are learning foreign languages, then we should not waste resources and time on basic courses late in students’ careers where those who gain fluency are typically only those who choose to pursue higher education in that language, when it is known that young children have a much greater cognitive capacity to learn multiple languages than do older children or adults.<sup>44</sup> It is also important for second-generation immigrants and their offspring to not become disconnected to their parents or

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<sup>41</sup> Stephen Krashen, “Bilingual Education: Arguments.”

<sup>42</sup> “Graduation Requirements,” *Tennessee Department of Education*.  
<https://www.tn.gov/education/topic/graduation-requirements>

<sup>43</sup> “College of Arts and Sciences Archived Catalog,” *The University of Tennessee Knoxville*,

[http://catalog.utk.edu/content.php?catoid=1&navoid=183#Foreign\\_Language](http://catalog.utk.edu/content.php?catoid=1&navoid=183#Foreign_Language)

<sup>44</sup> Linda M. Espinosa, “Challenges and Benefits,” 44.



grandparents' culture, as this leads to a loss of being able to communicate with them as their first language skills are replaced with English instead of complimented by it.<sup>45</sup>

*El Detallando y Análisis de Programas Bilingües Actuales*

Currently in the United States there are a few types of bilingual programs that have had various levels of proclaimed success. Each of these programs involves differing proportions of both English and first language instruction for differing time periods as well. Included among these instruction methods are programs that are either “transitional, maintenance of home language, [or] one-way or two-way dual language bilingual programs.”<sup>46</sup> Essentially, transitional bilingual programs seek to literally transition a DLL from bilingual instruction to completely English instruction as soon as possible. This is most likely the least effective form of bilingual education because nourishment of the first language stops as soon as proficiency in English is deemed reached, much the same as English only ESL and ELL programs. One-way bilingual programs “typically include only DLL students although they share the goals of bilingualism and biliteracy for the DLL participants.”<sup>47</sup> A two-way dual language bilingual program, however, can be described as the following,

A portion of the students are native English-speakers and all participants are expected to become bilingual and bi-literate in a second language, for DLL students it is English and for English-speaking students it is usually Spanish.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Worsnop, Richard L., “Bilingual Education: Which Programs Should the Clinton Administration Support?” *CQ Researcher* 3(30), (1993): 1-20, 3.

<sup>46</sup> Linda M. Espinosa, “Challenges and Benefits,” 48.

<sup>47</sup> Linda M. Espinosa, “Challenges and Benefits,” 48.

<sup>48</sup> Linda M. Espinosa, “Challenges and Benefits,” 48.

These programs also have much variety as well in the proportion of English to Spanish instruction that is used. The two proportions most often utilized are 90-10 and 50-50. Essentially, the 90-10 stands for 90% of the class time being spent in Spanish instruction, the other 10% in English, and 50-50 stands for almost equal division of the two languages of instruction throughout the program.<sup>49</sup>

The type of bilingual programs utilized are very important, for there is extensive research with details the nature of how damaging and negatively formative early bilingual education can be if done poorly by untrained teachers and misinformed parents. For example, many conventional bilingual programs include a strict “separation of languages in the classroom.” Their studies found that preventing code-switching like this actually caused a “den[ial] of their [bilingual students’] language as they were learning English.”

<sup>50</sup> This is dangerous, as there is an “inextricable link between language and identity,” and denying use of a language, even in an educational context of a bilingual classroom, is essentially denying students’ identities.<sup>51</sup> Even immigrant parents are guilty of denying their children’s identities unknowingly by pressuring them to speak only one language or the other. One parent in a study realized that she was doing just that:

Me doy cuenta de que estoy, estoy haciendo lo mismo . . . I’m denying their identity. Estoy negando la identidad de mis hijos. Esto es lo que son, se trata de cómo aprendieron, que están desarrollando su lenguaje . . . Their language is not wrong ... it’s different.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Linda M. Espinosa, “Challenges and Benefits,” 48.

<sup>50</sup> Lucila D. Ek & Guadalupe Domínguez Chávez, “Proyecto Bilingüe: Constructing a Figured World of Bilingual Education for Latino/a Bilingual Teachers, *Bilingual Research Journal*, 38(2), (Sept., 2015): 134-151, 142-143.

<sup>51</sup> Lucila D. Ek & Guadalupe Domínguez Chávez, “Proyecto Bilingüe,” 143.

<sup>52</sup> Lucila D. Ek & Guadalupe Domínguez Chávez, “Proyecto Bilingüe,” 142.

This has lead to severe problems with bilingual education in the United States, unbeknownst to those instructors and parents who are trying to nourish the students best.

However, much of this education is

Characterized by second language acquisition theories that espouse parallel monolingualism and sequential language acquisition that stipulates that children learn one language first before acquiring a second.<sup>53</sup>

This is why dual two-way bilingual and bicultural programs which incorporate parents into the community of learning is of absolute necessity and the superior form of facilitating a bilingual curriculum in order to secure best long term success of the students, academically, socially, and culturally.

#### *La Proposición de Este Trabajo Para el Programa Bilingüe Más Efectivo*

According to researcher Linda Espinosa, “successfully becoming a balanced bilingual will require sufficient exposure and high quality learning opportunities in both languages.”<sup>54</sup> It is for this reason this work proposes a dual two-way bilingual/bicultural program as the most beneficial to DLLs. This is because “research shows very clearly that the longer we can give them support in their language, the better they’re going to do not just in elementary school but in secondary school as well.”<sup>55</sup> Transitional models are not as effective because they aim for short-term goals instead of long term, and “what works in the long term is different from what works in the short term.”<sup>56</sup> Furthermore, dual-language models “come closer to narrowing the gap,” with English proficient students much more effectively than do ESL programs like those that Tennessee

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<sup>53</sup> Lucila D. Ek & Guadalupe Domínguez Chávez, “Proyecto Bilingüe,” 142.

<sup>54</sup> Linda M. Espinosa, “Challenges and Benefits,” 45.

<sup>55</sup> Kenneth Jost, “Bilingual Education vs. English Immersion.”

<sup>56</sup> Kenneth Jost, “Bilingual Education vs. English Immersion.”

supports.<sup>57</sup> Especially important to this program is family engagement and the creation of community, as “many researchers and policy experts are recommending stronger family engagement practices as a way to support home language maintenance.”<sup>58</sup>

Another important facet of this proposed program is the curriculum and types of instructors that are used. The ideal system would involve one class with one teacher, who “is a balanced bilingual-bicultural individual . . . able to teach in each language,”<sup>59</sup> and would provide instruction for different subjects according to which language would be most effective for the students to learn in. For example, Social Studies would best be taught in the native language of Spanish, “in view of its highly verbal and abstract content,” while Math would most often be taught in English based on “the commonality of its code to both languages,” and History and Culture would be taught with a mixed bilingual instruction “since it is based upon a contrast of two ways of living.”<sup>60</sup> If the district is not able to find enough balanced bilingual instructors, the classroom should be split between two teachers, one fluent in Spanish, the other in English, preferably with both having second language acquisition training. The academic subjects would be split the same way between the two languages.<sup>61</sup>

There actually is one school currently in Tennessee that supports and facilitates a bilingual education program. This program exists at Memphis’ Treadwell Elementary School in the Shelby County Schools district, and is “the home of the state’s only dual

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<sup>57</sup> Kenneth Jost, “Bilingual Education vs. English Immersion.”

<sup>58</sup> Linda M. Espinosa, “Challenges and Benefits,” 49.

<sup>59</sup> Eliane C. Condon, “Bilingual Education: A Survey,” 22.

<sup>60</sup> Eliane C. Condon, “Bilingual Education: A Survey,” 22.

<sup>61</sup> Eliane C. Condon, “Bilingual Education: A Survey,” 22.

language program.”<sup>62</sup> This program more closely follows the 90-10 format of Spanish to English instruction instead of the 50-50 distribution of language instruction like this work’s program proposes, however it also involves collaborative learning techniques in classrooms filled equally with both native Spanish and English speakers. The program has been utilized at Treadwell Elementary since 2009, and just graduated its first class, producing data that reveals the successes of this implementation. Overall, for Hispanics, “the program has helped to smooth the transition for many native Spanish speakers who fill up about half of its enrollment,” improving their retention and interest in learning. As for the native English speakers,

Simultaneously learning a new language while also learning new classroom material requires the sort of brain power and decoding that results in deeper comprehension and higher test scores. Student scores have outpaced those of fellow students in the rest of the school.<sup>63</sup>

Even so, pressures from the school district to improve LEP test scores in their early years of this program have put huge stresses on the faculty, as this excerpt of an interview with one faculty member reveals:

I’m not sure the district really knows what we are about,” said LeiRene Perez, a teacher in the program since its start. “They’re constantly pushing a lot more on us and the children. A child can be behind up until the fifth grade because they’re learning two languages.”<sup>64</sup>

Nevertheless, hopefully the district will eventually realize the true merits of this program, and seek the counsel of the educators themselves more than striving to retain funds based on faultily investigated political policies’ successes measured by discriminatory

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<sup>62</sup> Daarel Burnette, “For state’s only dual language program, turnaround efforts present challenges,” *Chalkbeat*. 29 April 2015, Web.  
<http://www.chalkbeat.org/posts/tn/2015/04/29/for-states-only-dual-language-program-turnaround-efforts-present-challenges/#.VzAbdxUrKCQ>

<sup>63</sup> Daarel Burnette, “For state’s only dual language program.”

<sup>64</sup> Daarel Burnette, “For state’s only dual language program.”

standardized testing. A more in depth study of the results of this program and the socio-cultural environment its students grow up in would help this work's Knox County application theory become best suited to it and most viably applicable and successful. If it can be done in the Shelby County Schools district, it can surely be done in the Knox County Schools district as it has much more resources and capacity to do so.

*Knox County, ELLs, y las Políticas y los Programas Actuales de Tennessee*

This work also seeks to put a practical emphasis on Knox County Schools through detailing its current policies and programs for ELL students, as well as Tennessee's state policies as well. It will then seek to apply the proposed dual two-way bilingual/bicultural program discussed in the previous section to this district and further argue that it would both work better ethically and academically than those in practice currently. Knox County contains a diverse population, especially when it comes to Hispanics, who make up the third largest ethnicity after White and African-American at 6.42%.<sup>65</sup> Therefore, especially since this population of Hispanics specifically is so vast in Knox County at over 1 out of every 20 students, it is of absolute necessity that their children are given equal opportunity to be nourished and build a strong foundation in their learning both in their native language of Spanish, (for those who speak Spanish at home), and in English as well.

However, Knox County Schools does not support any bilingual or bicultural initiatives, and actually even indirectly equivocates U.S. culture and U.S. English as superior in the path to whatever it deems academic success is through the rhetoric

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<sup>65</sup> "KCS Facts and Figures," *Knox County Schools*, <http://knoxschools.org/Page/5504>.

surrounding its policy descriptions. As stated on the front page of the English Language Learners Department section of the Knox County Schools website, Knox County's

ELL classes focus on communication and increasing proficiency in English. Teachers work closely with content teachers to provide [Knox County's] ELL students with greatest possible opportunity to achieve academic success.<sup>66</sup>

Before analyzing the rhetoric of this statement and others by Knox County Schools further, it is necessary to note the irony of this statement in that it speaks essentially of how increasing its English language learners' proficiency in English will make its students more successful, yet it contains a grammatical error. It lacks the definite article "the," in that last phrase before the adjective "greatest". In grammatically correct English, it should state "... provide [Knox County's] ELL students with *the* greatest possible opportunity . . . ." This is because "superlative adjectives and unique adjectives form the third group [of adjectives that require a definite article]. Because there can be only one of these (only one of a series can be the tallest or the best or the first), they take the definite article."<sup>67</sup> Yet, it does not contain this necessary article. Knox County Schools was not even able to describe how it will provide its English learners proficiency and success without including an error in English. This is quite frankly disconcerting and should be embarrassing to the district, even if it is just a typo of a carelessly forgotten word. Beyond this, the rhetoric in this statement suggests that academic success is only possible for ELL students through proficiency in English. This is true since there are no

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<sup>66</sup> "About Our ELL Department." *Knox County Schools*, <http://knoxschools.org/Domain/1004>

<sup>67</sup> Martine Johnston, "Special Cases in the Use of the Definite Article," *University of Toronto*, <http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/english-as-a-second-language/definite-article>

instruction methods legally mentioned by the state of Tennessee that involve the use of students' native languages, for ESL programs are the only approved methods under No Child Left Behind that Tennessee adheres to.<sup>68</sup>

Another statement by Knox County Schools on its ELL programming contains discriminatory rhetoric as well:

Our department strives to support and educate all non-native English speakers to become fully proficient in English and to gain an understanding of U.S. cultures so that they can be successful citizens in our dynamic global society.<sup>69</sup>

There is nothing in this statement that gives any value to the native cultures from which the non-native English speakers owe their heritage to. Furthermore, non-English speaking cultures should be included among the ambiguous "U.S. cultures" mentioned which lead to successful citizenship, but are not given any real value. This contradicts even one of Tennessee's own statements in its English as a Second Language Program Guide, which states

As the population of national origin minority students increases in all our communities, it is the responsibility of local governments and school districts to see that these federal laws are adhered to and that all our students are given the best chance possible to be productive, valuable, and valued in our society.<sup>70</sup>

Because of the low graduation rate of Tennessee LEP students mentioned earlier in the work, this mandate is not being upheld. Another state initiative is "for students to develop and maintain pride in their varied cultures of origin,"<sup>71</sup> which is not possible if the

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<sup>68</sup> "Tennessee English as a Second Language Program Guide," *State of Tennessee Department of Education*, Chapter 1.2.

<sup>69</sup> "About Our ELL Department." *Knox County Schools*, <http://knoxschools.org/Domain/1004>

<sup>70</sup> "Tennessee English as a Second Language Program Guide," *State of Tennessee Department of Education*, Section 1.5.

<sup>71</sup> "Tennessee English as a Second Language Program Guide," *State of Tennessee Department of Education*, Section 3.2.



language of their culture, which is indivisible with both culture and identity, is being denied them. A final critique of Knox County and Tennessee's language educational policies is that almost all of the educational theory research that is used to support these ELL and ESL policies comes from research done in the 1980s and the early 1990s. This is research that is almost 40 years outdated that is still being referenced today, and even the mandates included within this research is often gone unfulfilled or upheld.

*Cómo Funcionaría la Proposición de Este Trabajo en Knox County*

This failure of Tennessee's and Knox County's current ESL and ELL immersion systems to produce long-term results in its LEP students' success is what gives this work's proposal its greatest asset to achievement. The exact proposal is for a feasible program for English/Spanish bilingual elementary education, with the specific program being modeled after dual two-way bilingual/bicultural theory. How this program is facilitated has already been surveyed earlier in this work. This section will focus on how implementation could be possible in Knox County.

Essentially, Tennessee and Knox County's ELL and ESL policies have effectively and successfully caused their LEP students to "[learn] English at the expense of an education."<sup>72</sup> This violates the federal mandate, which proclaims

Schools retain an obligation to provide assistance necessary to remedy academic deficits that may have occurred in other subjects while the student was focusing on learning English." OCR Memorandum, "Policy Update on Schools' Obligations Toward National Origin Minority Students With Limited English Proficiency" September 27, 1991.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Kenneth Jost, "Bilingual Education vs. English Immersion."

<sup>73</sup> "Tennessee English as a Second Language Program Guide," *State of Tennessee Department of Education*, Section 1.15.

The ignorance of this federal obligation effectively “violates the students’ rights to educational opportunities that take advantage of their true capabilities.”<sup>74</sup> If this were to gain in awareness, the state and county would legally be bound to make changes to their current educational policies in order to give LEP students an equally valued opportunity to succeed. Through the research published in this work and many others, the state and county would then understand the necessity and benefits of a dual two-way bilingual program, and seek to implement it to fulfill federal standards of educational equality. Funding would be the first issue to resolve, but it could come from repurposing Title XII funds from ESL programs to these bilingual programs instead as one option. However, funding cannot be used as an excuse in opposition once the need for these programs have been identified, for

The Office for Civil Rights states that “limited financial resources do not justify failure to remedy a Title VI violation.” OCR Memorandum, “Office for Civil Rights Policy Regarding the Treatment of National Origin Minority Students Who are Limited English Proficient,” April 6, 1990.<sup>75</sup>

Furthermore, even if it were to appear that the state and county would be spending more money to hire bilingual teachers and purchase bilingual learning materials, the state would actually save money long-term by reducing high school drop-out rate and potential subsequent criminal costs that correlate with higher drop-out rates.<sup>76</sup>

### *Obstáculos Posibles Para Experimentar*

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<sup>74</sup> “Tennessee English as a Second Language Program Guide,” *State of Tennessee Department of Education*, Section 2.2.

<sup>75</sup> “Tennessee English as a Second Language Program Guide,” *State of Tennessee Department of Education*, Section 1.13.

<sup>76</sup> Eliane C. Condon, “Bilingual Education: A Survey,” 30.

There are quite obviously many obstacles to overcome in the practical implementation of this program in Knox County. Possible problems with this proposal include: How does the county get these bilingual instructors and how does it fund the program (already touched upon in the previous section), as well as probable backlash that includes fear of de-Americanization and possibly even possible claims of discrimination against non-Hispanic students and other minority language students. These are obstacles that would only even be experienced once the biggest obstacle of convincing voters and lawmakers in Knox County and in Tennessee that this program is necessary to uphold federal and state standards of education is accomplished. Furthermore, much training of bilingual teachers will be necessary in order to make sure this program is a success even if the obstacles of socio-political nature, financial nature, and of finding and hiring of qualified teachers are overcome.

*Los Obstáculos Verdaderamente Revelan la Necesidad y los Beneficios*

Even so, these obstacles in funding and training of bilingual teachers have prompted a large and rapidly growing quantity of quality, novel research studies and creative solutions to these complex obstacles. Specifically in regards to remedying the problem of there not being enough bilingual teachers with proper training to facilitate bilingual classes in order to serve a majority of DLLs who are in need of them, some universities in cities with large Hispanic populations have recently created unique undergraduate and graduate education degrees in bilingual/bicultural, Spanish/English instruction and research.

A University of Texas professor named Lucila D. Ek and an independent researcher named Guadalupe Domínguez Chávez have thoroughly researched and analyzed one of these programs known as “Proyecto Bilingüe, A Master of Arts in Curriculum and Instruction,” at the University of Texas at San Antonio.<sup>77</sup> This is a higher education program that serves to even further develop the effectiveness of bilingual instructors. Although it is principally “for veteran bilingual teachers who have taught in bilingual classrooms for at least 5 years,”<sup>78</sup> the findings of the study done by Ek and Chávez on its goals and effectiveness on bilingual and bicultural students’ learning development expands the scope of this program’s influence through revealing the need and benefits of dual two-way bilingual programs like the one this work proposes for Knox County Schools and other school districts.

Massachusetts is another state, as well as Arizona, that has approved policies which attack bilingual education much to the same extent that California’s Proposition 227 bill did in 1998, which effectively legally “impose[d] English as the only legitimate language in schools and the workplace, thereby devaluing non-white cultures”<sup>79</sup> by making it illegal to give bilingual support to students who could not effectively speak English. The case of Massachusetts is particularly disheartening because it truly reveals the lack of progress and even a direct reversal of progress in supporting equal education rights for bilingual and LEP students. It reveals this because as this work mentioned in the section titled, *Una Breve Historia de la Educación Bilingüe en los Estados Unidos*, multiple decades prior to Massachusetts’ passing of anti-bilingual education programs, in

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<sup>77</sup> Lucila D. Ek & Guadalupe Domínguez Chávez, “Proyecto Bilingüe,” 134.

<sup>78</sup> Lucila D. Ek & Guadalupe Domínguez Chávez, “Proyecto Bilingüe,” 135.

<sup>79</sup> Lucila D. Ek & Guadalupe Domínguez Chávez, “Proyecto Bilingüe,” 135.

the 1970s it was actually the first state to mandate and fund statewide bilingual programs for its language minority students.<sup>80</sup>

Thus, Massachusetts has made history twice in the past half century in the bilingual education debate: First, by having the honor of being first to recognize the need of bilingual education for its LEP children of its immigrant citizens, and now, by being one of the first to destroy progress in bilingual policies and chose xenophobia and English superiority instead. This just shows the need even more for common Americans to understand and respect other cultures and languages if states like Massachusetts are in a worse place now than they were fifty years ago. The best place to start this understanding is in the developmental stages of children in elementary schools by exposing them to multi-cultural and multi-lingual nourishment.

*El Legado Duradero de una Implementación Exitosa en Knox County*

The lasting benefits of this program on Knox County and the United States actually strongly relate to the other large obstacle mentioned in the previous section, which is the fear of de-Americanization and even more extreme pandemic xenophobia that is held by significant groups of people in the U.S. Even though these socio-cultural and political ideologies of a united, white, melting pot America will surely stand in the way of state and district bilingual programs all over the U.S. via the voice of the voters, much like what happened in California with its 1998 passing of Proposition 227, eventually progress and more concrete research becoming widely spread and discussed will prevail over bigotry and racism.

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<sup>80</sup> Kenneth Jost, "Bilingual Education vs. English Immersion."

These attitudes are still held today, however. Ek and Chávez refer to these as the term, “Whiteness,” which they define as being “marked by color-blindness,” that is, possessing stubbornly “an unwillingness to name the contours of racism, the avoidance of identifying with a racial experience or group, the minimization of racist legacy, and other similar evasions.”<sup>81</sup> However, California’s and other states’ acts of white, English superiority in their state policies towards eradicating bilingual education will surely diminish as younger generations stand up for progress and equality of diversity and inclusion in Knox County and the U.S. as well. A successful implementation of this dual two-way bilingual/bicultural program in Knox County will eventually lead to a more diverse, more self-aware, and more globally minded population of citizens growing up, living, and working in Knoxville.

*Comentarios Finales e Implicaciones Para el Futuro – ¿Qué Significa Ser  
Americano?*

The reader likely noticed that throughout the duration of this work, the headers of each section are written in Spanish even though the content of each section is written in English. This is done as a sign of respect to other cultures and languages in the United States, specifically to the Hispanic language and cultures that this paper devotes a primary focus to. This is also done to signify that bilingual programs in the U.S. would not seek to displace English with Spanish as the common tongue, and would not seek to make everything currently produced by the government in English translated into Spanish. Bilingual programs do not seek to produce monolingual Spanish speakers; they

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<sup>81</sup> Lucila D. Ek & Guadalupe Domínguez Chávez, “Proyecto Bilingüe,” 135.

actually transition LEP students into fluent English speakers better than do any other programs. So why do these arguments against bilingual education keep arising? If we are a country that seeks diversity in culture, why would we not seek diversity in language?

The bigger problem than a lack of equal education opportunities to limited English proficiency, dual language learning students is the culture of misconceptions, ignorance, and xenophobia that influence both social and political atmosphere in the U.S. towards immigrants and foreign languages that “severely restrict bilingual education.”<sup>82</sup> Because of this, “the negative feelings associated with foreign accents and ‘foreign ways’,”<sup>83</sup> must be eradicated in order to preserve the identity of the United States as the land of the free and of equal opportunity for all to thrive and secure life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. As more citizens who are not misinformed, ignorant, and xenophobic begin having discourse with the people these educational and political policies affect, the more intercultural awareness and respect for cultures and languages different from theirs will arise, and this will trickle down into educational policies that will logically lead to better support for bilingual programs in elementary schools and beyond.

The United States should not be seen as a melting pot of many cultures blending into one uniform U.S. culture, but a salad bowl of many unique cultures that are different. Yet, these differences compliment each other through the unity of the freedom provided by the system of equality our government has striven to promote ever since those fifty-five delegates met in 1787 to decide how and why this new nation could be a great one

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<sup>82</sup> Lynn M. Hempel, Julie A. Dowling, Jason D. Boardman, and Christopher G. Ellison, “Racial Threat and White Opposition to Bilingual Education in Texas,” *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, 35(1), 85-102, 86.

<sup>83</sup> Eliane C. Condon, “Bilingual Education: A Survey,” 30.

for all. The English language, though it will likely forever be the common tongue of the United States, should never be the official language. This is a nation of immigrants, it always has been, and it always should be. This diversity of cultures and ideas is what has always given the U.S. its greatest strengths, and always will continue to do so, and good bilingual education is the best way to secure this asset for the present and the future.



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