

**Bilingual Education vs. Sheltered English Immersion**  
 Bilingual education versus sheltered English immersion is a robust debate. Bilingual education is delivered in several ways. One-way programs include primarily language minority students whereas two-way programs include both English speakers and native or limited English speakers with instruction delivered in both languages. Transitional bilingual education initially delivers instruction in the students' native language(s) but seeks to transition the students quickly into English language skills. In contrast, sheltered English immersion provides instruction almost entirely in English, but in a self-contained classroom consisting only of English Language Learners (ELLs). In a sheltered English immersion classroom, the students are instructed a slower pace and are taught by a teacher trained in second language acquisition. To date there has not been a comprehensive, comparative research study on bilingual education and sheltered English immersion, but both approaches have their advocates.

Rossell and other proponents of sheltered English immersion believe that this approach offers, at least for the first year, the best opportunity for students to learn English and succeed in school. Their research also concluded that teachers preferred this instructional environment. (C. Rossell, "Teaching English Through English," *Educational Leadership*, 62, No. 4, December 2004/January 2005, pp. 32-36.) Conversely, Krashen asserts that the scientifically valid, controlled studies show that students enrolled in properly organized bilingual programs acquire as much English as those enrolled in sheltered English immersion classes. Students also learn to read more easily in a language they understand and can more rapidly transfer it to English. (S. Krashen, "Skyrocketing Scores: An Urban Legend," *Educational Leadership*, 62, No. 4, December 2004/January 2005, pp. 37-43. The Roseberry-McKibbon and Brice team, state that ideally English Language Learners should be taught in their first language 90% of the time in kindergarten and first grade. By the time they reach sixth grade at least 50% or more should be in English. Children taught in this manner do well in school because they understand what they are learning and are thus able to build underlying concepts and linguistics. (C. Roseberry-McKibbon and A. Brice, "What's 'Normal', What's Not," *American Speech-Language Hearing Association Leader*, June 20, 2001, retrieved on January 6, 2006 from <http://nsslha.org/public/speech/development/easl.htm>.)

Because of California's Proposition 227, requiring that English only be used in instruction, i.e. sheltered English immersion, an instructional model was developed. The Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) instrument, composed of 8 components, can be used as an evaluation tool or a lesson planning tool. More detailed information about the model is available at [www.siopinstitute.net/about.shtml](http://www.siopinstitute.net/about.shtml).

### Academic English: The Third Language

Although there is much disagreement about how to teach English to ELLs, the literature conclusively affirms that it is easier for students to learn basic communicative language skills, often referred to as playground English, than the formal English needed for academic study. Academic English includes the ability to read, write and speak correctly, coherently and substantively in the areas of science, math, social science and other school subjects. It means that the student must have command of figurative expressions, grammar structures, verb tenses as well as content knowledge. It requires that ELLs steadily expand their vocabularies and be able to use words in the structure and context of the academic subjects. Because of the complexity of learning Academic English, it is often referred to as the third language, i.e. not only must ELLs learn the formal language of their native country, the informal English language of conversation, but they must also learn the how to respond in writing and orally in the classroom and on examinations.

The importance of gaining real skill in the use of Academic English has recently become a research topic of interest. Although students can learn the basic English reading skills in two years, there is a growing body of research that indicates reading skills do not become proficient enough to maintain grade level achievement. (*Research Points*, American Educational Research Association, Winter 2004, Vol 2, Issue 1.)

Immigrant children arriving in the United States at the middle or high school level have a more difficult time in school because they lack the skills of Academic English. There is some question as to whether high school students have the patience to develop academic English skills since this is a time of establishing one's independence and individuality. The result is that they drop-out of school, often without even the skills to acquire a General Equivalency Degree (GED). Hispanics—the largest and fastest growing non-English speaking group—have a higher dropout rate than any other immigrant ethnic group. Many researchers and teachers who work with teenage immigrants feel that the deficit in the native formal language skills, the proximity to the legal age to drop out of school, and the compound difficulty of fitting into the teenage culture as well as the American school teenage culture is so overwhelming until many teenage immigrants do not even enroll in school or do not continue after a few months. (A. U. Chamot, *Literacy Development in High School English Language Learners*, Georgetown University Press, Digital Georgetown, and the Department of Languages and Linguistics, retrieved on January 6, 2006 at [http://digital.georgetown.edu/gurt/1999/gurt\\_1999\\_13.pdf](http://digital.georgetown.edu/gurt/1999/gurt_1999_13.pdf))

The table below shows ethnic groups not enrolled in school and who have not completed high school.

**Table 1. - Percentage Distribution of 16 to 24-year Olds Who Were Not Enrolled in School and Had Not Completed High School, by Race/Ethnicity and Recency of Migration: 1997**

Recency of Migration	Total	Hispanic			Non-Hispanic			
		Total	Mexican	Other Hispanic	Total	White	Black	Asian/Pacific Is.
Total	11.0	25.3	27.5	21.3	8.6	7.6	13.4	6.9
Born outside 50 states/DC	23.5	38.6	44.3	29.6	7.8	5.4	9.2	9.4
First generation	10.0	15.4	17.0	7.9	5.0	5.6	6.2	2.5
Later generation	9.3	17.7	18.3	14.2	9.0	7.9	14.1	5.3

[http://nces.ed.gov/programs/quarterly/vol\\_2/2\\_3/elem\\_highschool.asp](http://nces.ed.gov/programs/quarterly/vol_2/2_3/elem_highschool.asp)

### High Stakes Testing

Another issue that arises with academic English is that it the language of psychological tests and standardized tests. The test performance of ELLs is affected by their differential interpretation of questions, lack of vocabulary, language idioms and other linguistic problems. Because tests have not yet been developed that can distinguish between disabilities and the normal second-language learning development, there is an overrepresentation of culturally and linguistically diverse students in the areas of learning disabilities, mentally challenged and emotionally disturbed. Conversely, tests have not been developed to assess students' true potential with the result of ELLs being under represented in the gifted and talented classes. (J.K. Klingner and A. J. Artiles, "When Should Bilingual Students be in Special Education?" *Educational Leadership*, 8, No. 2, October 2003, pp. 66-71.)

A recent study (2005) of 1700 ELLs and former ELL students in Grades 4 and 10 were tested using both an English-language (Stanford Achievement Tests, 9<sup>th</sup> ed.) and a Spanish Language (Aprenda, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) achievement tests in mathematics. The results showed that the ELL students performed better on the Spanish language tests than the English based tests even though many of these students had exited their bilingual program and were considered to be English proficient. (R. Abella et.al., "An Examination of the Validity of English-Language Achievement Test Scores in an English Learner Population," *Bilingual Research Journal*, 29, No. 1, Spring 2005, pp. 127-144.) <http://brj.asu.edu/>

ELLs have not historically been included in high-stakes standardized testing, but the passage of NCLB now mandates that they be included. Given the requirement to make Adequate Yearly

Progress, teachers and school systems may need to take a serious look at what accommodations can be made to help the ELL students demonstrate their knowledge and skills on the tests.

### Shortage of Teachers

With the number of immigrants increasing in the United States, there will be an increase in the number of teachers needed to teach ELLs. Teachers to teach second language acquisition are in short supply just as they are in many other fields.

**Table 2: Number of Certified/Licensed Teachers Working in Language Instructional-Educational Programs in 2003-2004 and Estimated in Five Years**

	Teachers Currently in Program	Estimated Number in 5 Years
AL	126	1,600
FL	46,000	*
GA	2,831	3,460
MS	1,819	2,500
NC	969	1,519
SC	275	400

Findings from the Biennial Report as Provided by SERVE States, *The VISION*, 4, No. 1, 2005, p. 13.

Professional learning in language instructional programs must also do more than just teach skills to help students acquire a second language. Teachers must be made aware of cultural and behavior patterns to work effectively with the students' parents and to teach the students.

With the influx of immigrant and limited English learners in our schools, it appears that as novice teachers enter the profession and as school systems review their professional learning needs that more training must be offered, even required, in helping teachers develop skills to teach students needing second language acquisition skills. Without properly trained teachers, generations of young learners will go without the skills to make an economic, social and cultural contributions to society.

## Progress

Title III, Part A requires state and local educational agencies to set annual measurable achievement objectives for target populations and to achieve Adequate Yearly Progress. SERVE reports that despite the rapid influx of ELLs, 33 of the 42 states that submitted target data, met their objectives for students making progress in learning English. Forty-one of the states reported they were making some progress in helping students become English proficient. (K. Dufford-Melendez, "Title III—Language Instruction for Limited English Proficient and Immigrant Students" *The VISION*, 4, No. 1 2005, 22.)

While this progress is admirable, more effort must be put into finding better ways of educating these students. ■

## Resources

In addition to the resources cited above, the reader may find these sources helpful.

Carrier, K. "Key Issues for Teaching English Language Learners in Academic Classrooms," *Middle School Journal*, 37, No. 2, 4-9.

Coltrane, B. "English Language Learners and High Stakes Tests: an Overview of the Issues," *CAL Digests*, EDO-FL-02-07, November 2002, retrieved on January 18, 2006 from <http://www.cal.org/resources/digest/0207coltrane.html>.

De Cohen, C. C.; Deterding, N. and Clewell, B.C., *Who's Left Behind? Immigrant Children in High and Low LEP Schools*, The Urban Institute, September 2005, retrieved on January 6, 2006 from <http://www.urban.org/education/index.cfm?page=2>

English Language Learners," *The VISION*, SERVE's Magazine, 4, No. 1, 2005. The entire issue is devoted to this topic.

Girard, K. "Lost in Translation: Reaching Out to English Language Learners," *Edutopia*, November 2005, 36-38.

McLaughlin, Barry. "Myths and Misconceptions About Second Language Learning: What Every Teacher Needs to Unlearn." National Center for Research on Cultural Diversity and Second Language Learning, Educational Practice Report 5, 1992, retrieved on January 6, 2006 from <http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/pubs/ncrcdssl/epr5.htm>.

Thomas, W. P. and Collier, V. P., "The Multiple Benefits of Dual Language." *Education Leadership*, 81, No. 2, October 2003, 61-63.

Walters, L. S. "The Bilingual Education Debate," *Harvard Education Letter*, May/June 1998, retrieved on January 6, 2006 from <http://www.edletter.org/past/issues/1998-mj/bilingual.shtml>.

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# Issue Brief

Professional Association of Georgia Educators  
Vol. 8 No. 1 February 2006



## Bilingual Education

**A**ccording to Southeastern Region Vision for Education (SERVE), Georgia served 59,126 students with limited English proficiency in 2003-2004. This was a 397.8 % increase over the past decade. This rapid influx caught the schools vastly unprepared—teachers were not trained, appropriate materials were not on-hand and schedules had to be revised to accommodate the instruction.

With the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) in 2001, the Bilingual Education Act and the Emergency Immigrant Education program, previously Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, became Title III of NCLB. Title III is known as Language Instruction for Limited English Proficient and Immigrant Students. Part A of Title III requires school systems to show that limited English proficient students have improved in their language acquisition and in their core knowledge. Part B is concerned with community and local school programs which help students develop proficiency in their native language while meeting academic standards. Part C is the general provisions of the law. Of particular importance is the provision that parental notification of a child's placement in the language program must occur within 30 days of the beginning of the school year or within two weeks of being placed in the language program. Part C also establishes the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition and Language Instruction Education Programs which collects, analyzes, synthesizes, and disseminates information related to the instruction of limited English proficiency students (LEPs).

The Clearinghouse can be accessed at <http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/>.

With the influx of so many immigrant students, several issues have arisen on how to best educate these students while continuing to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) and meet the other demands of today's classrooms.

### Issues in Teaching Students with Limited English Proficiency

#### Bilingual Language vs. English Only

According to Kathleen Dufford-Melendez, the last fifteen years have seen unprecedented immigration to the United States and has resulted in Americans feeling their country's unity and nationalism challenged. This has resulted in many feeling that students should be taught English only. Proponents of this philosophy feel that learning and using the English language is the quickest way to assimilate students into the American culture. On the other hand, bilingual education proponents proclaim that the use of native language instruction promotes the transfer of native skills to the acquisition of English and academic success while preserving the traditions and

culture of the native land. (K. Dufford-Melendez, "A Look at Bilingual Education," *The VISION*, 4, No. 1 2005, 22.) Added to the debate is that the immigration to the United States has come from so many different countries that it is impossible to offer bilingual education because there are not teachers trained in the many languages and dialects. There is also the additional problem of having enough students of one language to require a teacher. Some teachers feel that the language skills of many immigrant children are so poor that it is time is wasted in teaching them the formal language of their culture. They feel that this instructional time should be put to teaching the students English. However, research seems to show that students who are involved in bilingual education express a more positive attitude toward schools, believe that training in two languages helped them to do better in school and gave them more confidence in school. (K. J. Lindholm-Leary, "The Rich Promise of Two-Way Immersion," *Educational Leadership*, 62, No. 4, December 2004/January 2005, pp. 58-59.)

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