

EMPOWERING MINORITY STUDENTS: AN ANALYSIS OF THE BILINGUAL EDUCATION DEBATE ¹

Por
Jim Cummins Ontario*

RESUMEN

El presente documento establece que, en esencia, la controversia acerca de la educación bilingüe representa el drama de una sociedad en proceso de autoafirmarse. Por un lado, la necesidad de mantener la estructura de poder tradicional, y por el otro, el deseo de vivir de acuerdo con los ideales que crearon a los Estados Unidos. Esta última opción implicaría la creación de una sociedad en donde la igualdad, la libertad y la justicia representan más que una simple retórica. En la presentación de su caso, el autor examina el contexto histórico de la educación bilingüe. Se concluye que las causas fundamentales del fracaso de la educación de los estudiantes minoritarios, tiene su raíz en un proceso histórico-social de debilitamiento y despojo de los grupos minoritarios. Se explica la forma tradicional en que las escuelas reflejan la estructura de poder de la sociedad y explica también la racionalización que se hace acerca del debilitamiento educativo de las minorías. El autor ofrece un marco de intervención para revertir esta tendencia y prevenir el fracaso académico de los estudiantes minoritarios; sin embargo, el autor advierte que la práctica de una pedagogía de "apoderamiento" ² (empowerment), difícilmente recibiría el apoyo de los grupos dominantes porque, casi por definición, la pedagogía de apoderamiento demanda que los educadores, como individuos, y las escuelas, como instituciones, desafíen el racismo institucionalizado que todavía persiste en muchos aspectos de la sociedad.

* Native of Ireland, received his Ph.D. from the University of Alberta in Canada. He worked at the Educational Research Center, Dublin, investigating the consequences of Irish-English bilingualism and bilingual education. Researcher at the Center of Modern Language at the Ontario Institute of Studies in Education, Toronto, Canada.

Nativo de Irlanda, realizó su doctorado en la Universidad de Alberta en Canadá. Trabajó en el Centro de Investigación Educativa de Duplin investigando las consecuencias del bilingüismo anglo-irlandés y la educación bilingüe. Investigador en el Centro de Lenguas Modernas del Instituto de Ontario de Estudios Educativos en Toronto, Canadá.

¹ This paper summarizes and extends the main arguments in a monograph entitled "empowering minority students" published by the California Association for Bilingual Education.

² La palabra que utiliza el autor en inglés es *empowerment*, que resulta difícil de traducir. En este resumen se usan como traducciones aproximadas "dando poder" y "apoderamiento", mientras que para *disempowerment*, se utilizan "debilitamiento" y "despojo".

ABSTRACT

This paper argues that the nature of the bilingual education debate, represents a drama of societal self-definition. On one hand the commitment to preserve traditional power structures, and on the other, the desire to live up to the ideals upon which the U.S. was founded. The latter implies the creation of a society where equality, freedom and justice represent more than just empty rhetoric. In order to build his case, the author examines the historical context of minority education in the U.S. and the surface text of the arguments both for and against the effectiveness of bilingual education. He concludes that the fundamental causes of minority students' school failure are rooted in socio historical processes of minority group disempowerment. The ways are outlined in which schools have traditionally reflected the societal power structure and rationalized the education disablement of minority students. An invention framework designed to reverse this pattern and prevent minority student academic failure is proposed. However, the author cautions that the implementation of empowerment pedagogy is unlikely to be facilitated by the dominant group because, almost by definition, empowerment pedagogy requires educators as individuals and schools as institutions to challenge the institutionalized racism that still persists in many aspects of society.

INTRODUCTION

During the past decade hardly a week has-gone by without some story concerning the education of language minority students appearing in the popular press or in more specialized publications such as *Education Week*. The debate about the extent to which children's native language should be used for instructional purposes has been volatile, divisive and bitter. The extremely strong opposition to programs that promote bilingualism among minority students (an attempt to foster a secure sense of identity is not difficult to explain. These programs challenge a division of power and status in the society (i.e. a power structure) that has been established over centuries. In the past, the majority of Hispanic, Black and Native American students have dropped out of school and have occupied the same low-paying and low-status jobs that their parents occupied. Schools historically have reflected the societal power structure by eradicating minority students' language and identity and by attributing their school failure to inherent deficiencies (e.g. genetic inferiority, the cognitively debilitating consequences of bilingualism, "cultural deprivation" etc).

Why has the education of minority students become a politically-explosive issue at this point in American history? Minorities are clearly not a new phenomenon in North American schools. Black, Hispanic, and especially Native Americans, the three groups that currently experience the most obvious educational failure, have inhabited North America long before the United States of America came into existence. Immigrant children, speaking a diverse array of native languages, have been characteristic of American schools for more than a century.

I shall argue that a conflict is the result of a nation trying to define itself; torn between, on the one hand, the commitment to preserve traditional power structures that blatantly contravene the high ideals of equality and justice upon which the nation was founded; and on the other, the desire to live up to those ideals and create a society where notions of equality, freedom and justice represent more than just empty rhetoric.

During the late sixties and early seventies, policy-makers and educators in the United States (and in other western countries) began to take seriously notions of equality and justice that, prior to then, had been honored primarily at a rhetorical level. For example, the Equality of Educational Opportunity provisions enacted in the mid-sixties aimed to counteract the discrimination of all types in the educational system.

It would be unrealistic, however, to expect all manifestation of discrimination to disappear overnight since this discrimination has been supported by societal institutions over many generations. Thus, despite the fact that the societal commitment to overcome discrimination is genuine and strong (and significant amounts of money have been committed to this in the United States), there are many forces in the society that operate to preserve traditional power status divisions.

Education (or the lack of it) has always been a major means of reinforcing the social status and economic structures that exist in the society. However, the fact that obvious forms of discrimination can no longer be tolerated by the society requires that those who wish to preserve the existing power structure disguise educational programs that continue to disable minority children as being in children's own best interests. Thus, the eradication of minority students' language and pride is justified as necessary to help them learn English. By the same token, programs that generate a sense of personal and academic confidence in minority children (*i.e.* empower children) must either be ignored or their effects distorted. Bilingual education, in particular, is seen as a threat to the existing power structure because it institutionalizes and legitimizes the use of a traditionally stigmatized language at a time when the Hispanic population is growing rapidly.

In short, the purpose of the paper is to clarify the nature of the "bilingual education" debate with respect to the challenge that bilingual education is seen to constitute to a societal power structure that has preserved itself over many generations. Behind the scenes of the debate about the effectiveness or otherwise of any particular educational strategy, a drama of societal self-definition is being acted out. In order to appreciate the subtext of this drama, it is necessary to examine both the historical context of minority education in the United States and also the surface text of the arguments both for and against the effectiveness of bilingual education.

THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Many commentators have objected strenuously to the implementation of bilingual education programs because they appear to run counter to the American tradition of assimilating immigrant groups into the mainstream of society. To these commentators, the increased status that accrues to a language (*e.g.* Spanish) as a result of being recognized for instructional purposes in schools appears likely to hinder the efficient operation of the melting pot. Not only will individuals who speak that language be rewarded with jobs and other incentives, but children will also be encouraged to retain their language. To opponents of bilingual education the apparent encouragement of ethnic distinctiveness is especially unpalatable at the present time since the rapid growth of the Spanish-speaking population is already posing a threat to the dominance of the Anglo majority in several parts of the country (*e.g.* Florida, Southern California). A favorite theme of many commentators is that the melting pot worked well for previous generations of immigrants who "made it" without crutches, and Hispanic children could also make it if they tried.

This attitude shows a profound ignorance of American educational history. The groups that currently tend to experience the most educational difficulty (Black, Hispanic and Native American) were never given the opportunity to "melt" into the American mainstream. Unlike immigrant groups, these three groups have had the status of "internal colonies" (Blauner, 1969) in that they have been conquered, subjugated, and regarded as inherently inferior for generations by members of the dominant Anglo group.

In fact, from a historical point of view, the concerns about bilingual education being against American traditions and a potential catalyst for Hispanic separatist tendencies are somewhat ironic in view of the fact that the education of Mexican-Americans in the Southwest was openly dedicated until the late 1960's to separating Mexican-American students from the mainstream of American society by means of segregated schooling (conducted exclusively in English). In Texas, for example, the judgement of the court in the United States versus the State of Texas case (1981) documented the "pervasive, intentional discrimination throughout most of this century" against Mexican-American students (a charge that was not contested by the State of Texas in the trial) and noted that:

"The long history of prejudice and deprivation remains a significant obstacle to equal educational opportunity for these children. The deep sense of inferiority, cultural isolation, and acceptance of failure, instilled in a people by generations of subjugation, cannot be eradicated merely by integrating the school and repealing the 'no Spanish' statutes" (1981: 14).

In the case of immigrant minorities, schooling was generally not segregated but the same overt goals (acculturation to the dominant culture) and methods (punish-

ment for speaking the home language) were used. Contrary to popular belief, many first generation immigrant children experienced considerable difficulty in school. Cohen (1970) sums up the findings of a comprehensive review of the educational achievement of immigrant students in the early part of this century as follows:

"The evidence... suggests that in the first generation, at least, children from many immigrant groups did not have an easy time in school. Pupils from these groups were more likely to be retarded than their native white schoolmates, more likely to make low scores on IQ tests, and they seem to have been a good deal less likely to remain in high school" (1970:24).

Many of these first generation immigrants may have become successful economically since much less education was required for economic and social advancement at the beginning of this century than is the case at the present time.

Minority children's educational difficulties were generally attributed to inherent attributes of the children or their communities rather than to any influence of the type of school program they experienced. Table I outlines how the familiar process of "blaming the victim" (Ryan, 1972) has operated historically with respect to bilingual children.

In summary, the preceding discussion emphasizes the critical role that the social context in general, and in particular, the power relations between ethnic groups, play in determining minority children's language learning and academic achievement. The major points are as follows:

- the minority groups that tend to experience the most severe academic disadvantage have been in a dominated relationship to the Anglo majority for centuries and have never been given the opportunity to assimilate into the American mainstream; on the contrary, they were subjected over generations to segregated and inferior schooling, they were punished for speaking their home language in school, and their pride in their cultural identity was systematically eradicated;

- the educational treatment that these minority children received and the attitudes of educators have tended to reflect the treatment and attitudes that their communities experienced in the wider society; both, children and adults, have been prevented from full participation and advancement in mainstream societal institutions (*e.g.* schools, the job market, etc.) through segregation and discrimination;

- although early generations of immigrant children did tend to experience academic difficulties, they were not discriminated against nor segregated educationally to the same extent as the dominated minorities; thus, an inferior self-image was not internalized by the group and later generations assimilated to the mainstream society and tended to succeed academically;

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Blaming the Victim in the Education of Minority Students

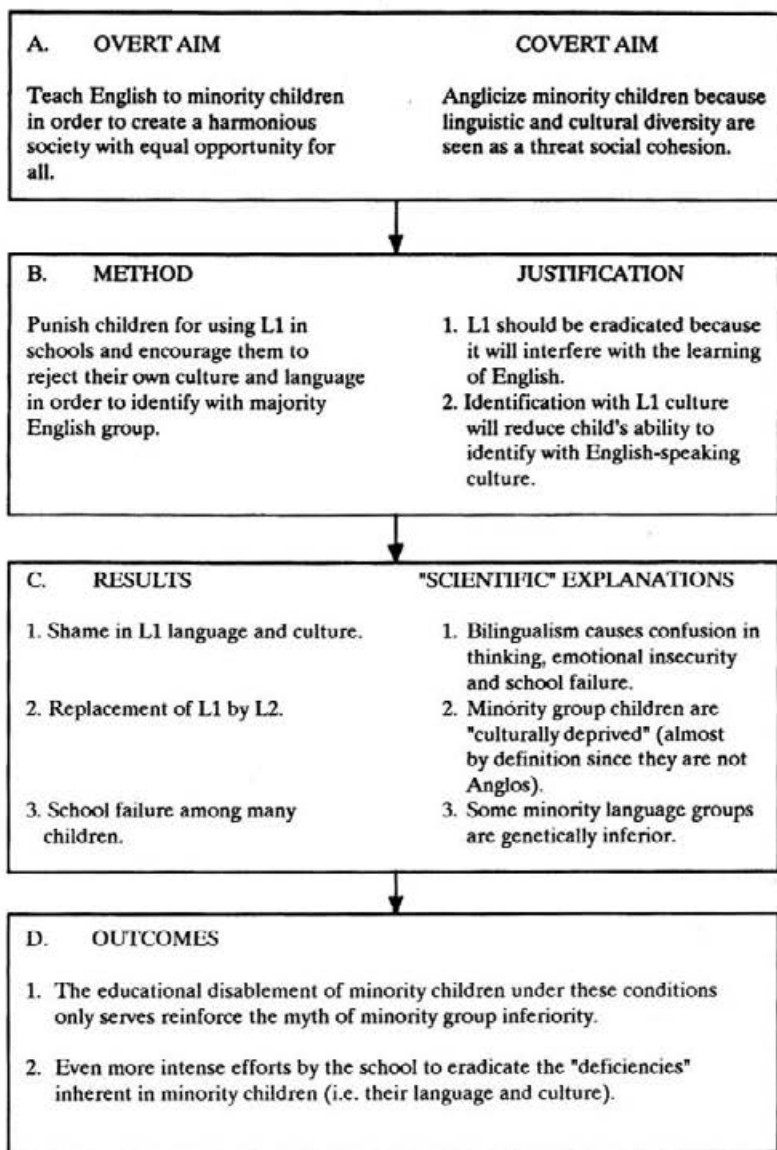


FIGURA 1

- school failure on the part of minority students was generally attributed to some inherent deficiency within the child, either genetic or experiential (*e.g.* cultural deprivation, bilingual confusion, etc.); this focus on inherent deficiencies of the minority child served to deflect attention away from the educational treatment that children were receiving;

PSYCHOEDUCATIONAL ISSUES: A) THE OPPOSING RATIONALES OF BILINGUAL EDUCATION AND ENGLISH IMMERSION

The rationale for bilingual education in the United States as it is understood by most policy makers and practitioners can be stated as follows:

Lack of English proficiency is the major reason for language minority students' academic failure. Bilingual education is intended to ensure that students do not fall behind in subject matter content while they are learning English, as they would likely do in an all English program. However, when students have become proficient in English, they can be exited to an all-English program, since limited English proficiency will no longer impede their academic progress.

There are serious problems with this rationale for bilingual education, despite its intuitive appeal. In the first place, it ignores the sociohistorical determinants of minority students' school failure. Second, it assumes that "linguistic mismatch" between home and school, or a home-school language switch, constitutes an adequate explanation for why minority children experience difficulty at school, despite the fact that there are a considerable number of counter-examples of both minority and majority students who do well academically under home-school language switch conditions. Third, the question of what exactly constitutes proficiency in English is left vague, despite its central importance to the entire rationale. These issues are discussed below in the context of a more adequate rationale for bilingual programs.

The psychoeducational assumptions underlying the usual rationale for bilingual education are not very different from those advanced by opponents of bilingual education. For opponents, linguistic factors are again assumed to be central in that lack of English exposure is viewed as the major causal variable that explains students' school failure. However, rather than endorsing a first language (L1) bridge between home and school as advocates of bilingual education propose, opponents argue that minority students require maximum exposure to English in school. To dilute this exposure by instructing children partly in their L1 appears counter-intuitive in that it suggests that less English instruction will result in more English achievement.

Some recent statements of the rationale for maximum exposure to English come from a conference entitled "Public Policy Issues in Bilingual Education",

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funded by U.S. English, an advocacy-group stongly opposed to bilingual education. As reported in *Education Week* (Bradley, April 19, 1989:6).

"Parents should have the right to decide whether their children are taught in a language other than English, several researchers argued at a bilingual-education conference held [in Washigton] last week. Extending the concept of parental choice to bilingual education would offer families the option of preserving their native language, the experts suggested. But, they warned, such policies also should be crafted to avoid taking students' time away from learning English.

Christine H. Rossell of Boston University... recomended that school officials offer voluntary bilingual education in grades K-12, while also extending the school day to ensure that limited-English-speaking children receive the same amount of English instruction as other students.

Herbert J. Walberg of the University of Illinois at Chicago also endorsed parental choice for language minorities. "Bilingual education, he said, 'has not met its promises'... 'To deny these children the maximum English in school would be an injustice', he argued".³

The call by Rossell and Walberg for "parental choice" with respect to bilingual education is at best naive and at worst hypocritical in view of the fact that only about one-third of limited-English-proficient students are receiving any form of language assistance or otherwise (National Coalition of Advocates for Students, 1988). Also, a large number of school districts have implemented bilingual programs minimally or not at all despite strong parental pressure. The call for "parental choice" is probably intended to imply tht bilingual education is being imposed on unwiling minority parents by "ethic leaders" whose political advancement rather than students' well-being is uppermost in their minds. This perspective has certainly been advanced by John Edwards (e.g. 1980), also an invited speaker at the conference.

However, the major assumption that I wish to comment on in the remarks of Rosell and Walberg is that there is a direct relationship between amount of English instruction and development of English language academic skills. Thus, it is suggested, bilingual children will suffer academically if their exposure to English at school is diluted as a result of L1 instruction.

³James Banks, a strong advocate of multicultural education, also spoke at the conference and called on the nation to adopt a policy of teaching all students in both English and Spanish on the grounds that students who are "disconnected" from their heritage often become confused and self-understanding is a prerequisite for relating positively to other people. This is unlikely to have been the message that U.S. English wanted to hear.

For academics to promote this view can only be described as scientifically irresponsible in view of the virtual absence of supporting empirical data and the fact that countless evaluation studies of bilingual programs all around the world show exactly the opposite pattern (see Cummins, 1984, 1989; Hakuta, 1986). Evaluation of bilingual programs consistently show either no relationship or a negative relationship between amount of instruction in the majority language and achievement in that language (see, for example, Baker and de Kanter, 1981; Cummins and Swain, 1986; Linde and Lofgren, 1988; Willig, 1985).

One might have expected some caution amount of English instruction and English achievement in view of the highly publicized initial results of a large-scale longitudinal comparison of English immersion, early-exit bilingual programs (approximately 33% L1 instruction for two or three years) and late-exit bilingual programs (approximately 66% L1 instruction, K-6). This study involved 4,000 Hispanic students and was commissioned by the Department of Education at a cost of \$4.1 million under the supervision of Keith Baker, a strong advocate of English immersion. James Crawford (1988) summarized the initial results of the study which were leaked to the press in April, 1986:

"The poor showing for immersion and the consistency of results favoring native-language development astounded even the most ardent backers of bilingual education. Immersion students scored lowest in almost every academic subject, and late-exit bilingual students scored highest with TBE [transitional bilingual] education] students falling at points in between, *when all groups were tested in English* (emphasis original). The gap tended to widen the longer students stayed in their respective program" (1988:121).

David Ramirez, who directed the study, summarized the results as follows: "Students in both types of bilingual programs consistently gain more than do immersion strategy students in reading, language arts, and math" (cited in Crawford, 1988, p.121).⁴

In short, those who suggest that minority students will suffer academically as a result of receiving part of their instruction through the medium of L1 have either not read the research evidence or have chosen cynically to ignore it.

PSYCHOEDUCATIONAL ISSUES: B) CONSISTENT RESEARCH TRENDS

The dispute regarding the effectiveness of bilingual education has suggested to many makers that there is little consistent research evidence pertaining to this

⁴ The final results of this study will be released in september, 1989. It is interesting to note that publication of Crawford's books was delayed as a result of a threat by U.S. English to sue the publisher (Crane Publishing Company, Inc.). Presumably U.S. English was concerned that Crawford's status as former Washington. Editor of *Education Week* would confer considerable credibility on the book.

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issue. In fact, the research evidence regarding the consequences of bilingual education are highly consistent and theoretically interpretable. These patterns have been considered in detail elsewhere (e.g. Cummins, 1984, 1989) and will only be sketched here.

Additive Bilingual Enrichment

Many recent studies suggest that far from being a negative force in children's personal and academic development, bilingualism can positively affect both intellectual and linguistic progress when children continue to develop both their languages, i.e. develop an additive form of bilingualism (Lambert, 1975). A large number of studies have reported that bilingual children who add a second language to their repertory of skills exhibit a greater sensitivity to linguistic meanings and may be more flexible in their thinking than are monolingual children (Cummins, 1984; Hakuta, 1986). Most of these studies have investigated aspects of children's metalinguistic development; in other words, children's explicit knowledge about the structure and functions of language itself.

In general, it is not surprising that bilingual children should be more adept at certain aspects of linguistic processing. In gaining control over two language systems, the bilingual child has had to decipher much more language input than the monolingual child who has been exposed to only one language system. Thus, the bilingual child has had considerably more practice in analysing than the monolingual child.

The evidence is not conclusive as to whether this linguistic advantage transfers to more general cognitive skills; McLaughlin's review of the literature, for example, concludes that:

It seems clear that the child who has mastered two languages has a linguistic advantage over the monolingual child. Bilingual children become aware that there are two ways of saying the same thing. But does this sensitivity to the lexical and formal aspects of language generalize to cognitive functioning? There is no conclusive answer to this question—mainly because it has proven so difficult to apply the necessary controls in research (1984, p.44).

In short the conclusion that emerges from studies conducted over the past 25 years is that the development of additive bilingual and biliteracy skills entails no negative consequences for children's academic, linguistic, or intellectual development. On the contrary although not conclusive, the evidence points in the direction of subtle metalinguistic, academic and intellectual benefits for bilingual children.

The Linguistic Interdependence Principle

The fact that there is either little relationship or an inverse relationship between amount of instructional time through the majority language and academic achieve-

ment in that language, strongly suggests that first and second language academic skills are interdependent, *i.e.*, manifestations of a common underlying proficiency. The interdependence principle has been stated formally as follows (Cummins, 1981b, p.29):

To the extent that instruction in Lx is effective in promoting proficiency in Lx, transfer of this proficiency to Ly will occur provided there is adequate exposure to Ly (either in school or environment) and adequate motivation to learn Ly.

This principle is supported in virtually all the evaluations of bilingual education conducted throughout the world (see, for example, E.I.F.E.2, [1989] for recent evaluation data from the Basque Country). In concrete terms, what this principle means is that in, for example, a Spanish-English bilingual program, Spanish instruction that develops Spanish reading and writing skills (for either Spanish L1 or L2 speakers) is not just developing Spanish skills, it is also developing a deeper conceptual and linguistic proficiency that is strongly related to the development of literacy in the majority language (English). In other words, although the surface aspects (*e.g.* pronunciation, fluency, etc.) of different languages are clearly separate, there is an underlying cognitive/academic proficiency which is common across languages. This "common underlying proficiency" makes possible the transfer of cognitive/academic or literacy-related skills across languages. Transfer is much more likely to occur from minority to majority language because of the greater exposure to literacy in the majority language outside of school and the strong social pressure to learn it.

The consistent data supporting interdependence of conceptual knowledge across languages refutes the assumption that minority students require maximum exposure to English in school in order to succeed academically. Ironically, second language immersion programs (*e.g.* Canadian French immersion programs) constitute one of the major sources of evidence for linguistic interdependence in the programs instruction through a minority language for all or part of the school day results in no negative effects on English language skills development. French immersion programs are full bilingual programs, taught by bilingual teachers, whose explicit goal is to develop additive bilingualism and biliteracy. The theoretical and logical incoherence of the arguments against bilingual education are reflected in the fact that the results of French immersion programs have been used to argue for monolingual English-only programs, taught largely by monolingual teachers, and aimed at producing monolingualism (Baker and de Kanter, 1981; Gersten and Woodward, 1985a, 1985b⁴). A split-brain logic characterizes much of the opposition to bilingual education in that the "maximum exposure" position is justified on the basis of empirical data (*e.g.* French immersion programs, the Baker and de Kanter review) while ignoring the fact that all of this empirical data contradicts the assumptions underlying this position.

A FRAMEWORK FOR MINORITY STUDENT EMPOWERMENT

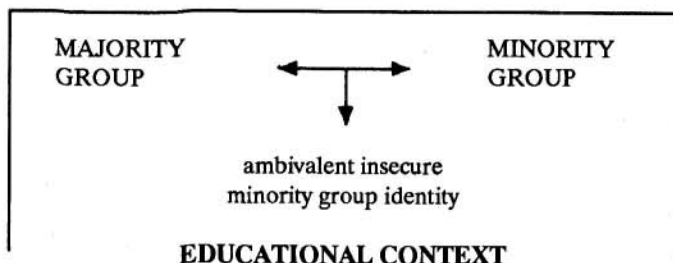
It was suggested above that the linguistic mismatch hypothesis does not constitute an adequate explanation for minority students' academic difficulties. Linguistic factors cannot account for the variability of minority students' academic performance under similar home-school language switch conditions nor can linguistic mismatch explain why students in French immersion programs suffer no adverse academic consequences as a result of being taught initially through a second language.

Examination of the historical context of minority students' education suggested that power and status relations between dominant and dominated groups were a significant factor in accounting for minority students' school failure. Minority groups that tend to experience academic difficulty (e.g. Finns in Sweden, Hispanic, Black, and Native American groups in the U.S., Franco-Ontarian, Black and Native groups in Canada) appear to have developed an insecurity and ambivalence about the value of their own cultural identity as a result of their interactions with the dominant group. Ogbu and Matute-Bianchi (1986) have provided a detailed review of the enormous variability in academic performance among linguistic minority groups. Among the phenomena they report is the fact that in Japan Buraku outcaste (a very low status group) tend to perform poorly, but when they immigrate to the United States they do as well as other Japanese students.

Another example noted in the Swedish and U.S. context is the fact that minority students from dominated groups who immigrate relatively late (about ten years of age) often appear to have better academic prospects than students of similar socioeconomic status born in the host country, despite much less exposure to the school language (Skutnabb-Kangas and Toukoma, 1976). These findings have been attributed, in part at least, to the fact that these students have not experienced devaluation of their identity in the social institutions (e.g. schools) of the host country as has been the case for students born in that setting (see e.g. Cummins, 1984; and discussions in Epstein, 1977).

A central proposition of the theoretical framework outlined in Figure 2 is that minority students are disempowered educationally in very much the same way that their communities are disempowered by interactions with societal institutions. The converse of this is that minority students will succeed educationally to the extent that patterns of interaction in school reverse those that prevail in the society at large. In short, minority students are "empowered" or "disabled" as a direct result of their interaction with educators in the schools. These interactions are mediated by the implicit or explicit role definitions that educators assume in relation to four institutional characteristics of schools. These characteristics reflect the extent to which:

SOCIETAL CONTEXT



EDUCATOR ROLE DEFINITIONS

	INTER CULTURAL ORIENTATION	ANGLO- CONFORMITY ORIENTATION
CULTURAL/LINGUISTIC	Additive	Subtractive
COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION	Collaborative	Exclusionary
PEDAGOGY	Interactive/ experiential	Transmission
ASSESSMENT	Advocacy- oriented	Legitimization- oriented
	↓	↓
	EMPOWERED STUDENTS	DISABLED STUDENTS

FIGURE 2. Empowerment of minority students: A framework for intervention.

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1. minority students' language and culture are incorporated into the school program;
2. minority community participation is encouraged as an integral component of children's educations;
3. the pedagogy promotes intrinsic motivation on the part of students to use language actively in order to generate their own knowledge; and
4. professionals involved in assessment become advocates for minority students by focusing primarily on the ways in which students' academic difficulty is a function of interactions within the school context rather than legitimizing the location of the "problem" within students.

Each dimension can be analyzed along a continuum, with one end reflecting an intercultural or anti-racist orientation (role definition) and the other reflecting the more traditional Anglo-conformity (assimilationist) orientation. The overall hypothesis (prediction is that this latter orientation will tend to result in the personal and/or academic disabling of minority students while intercultural orientations (as operationally defined with respect to the framework) will result in minority students empowerment, a concept that, in the present context, implies the development of the ability, confidence and motivation to succeed academically.

1. Cultural/Linguistic Incorporation

Considerable research data suggest that for minority groups who experience disproportionate levels of academic failure, the extent to which students' language and culture are incorporated into the school program constitutes a significant predictor of academic success (see Cummins, 1984, 1989, for reviews). In programs where minority students' L1 skills are strongly reinforced, their school success appears to reflect both the more solid cognitive/academic foundation developed through intensive L1 instruction and also the reinforcement of their cultural identity.

With respect to the incorporation of minority students' language and culture, educators' role definitions can be characterized along an "additive-subtractive" dimension (see Lambert, 1975). Educators who see their role as adding a second language and cultural affiliation to students' repertoire are likely to empower students more than those who see their role as replacing or subtracting students' primary language and culture in the process of assimilating them to the dominant culture. As outlined above, the psychoeducational research evidence suggests that additive bilingualism may enhance certain aspects of cognitive functioning while the use of students' L1 in the school context can contribute to reversing the devaluation of students' language and culture in the wider society.

2. Community participation

It has been argued (Cummins, 1989) that minority students will be empowered in the school context to the extent that the communities themselves are empowered

through their interactions with the school. When educators involve minority parents as partners in their children's education, parents appear to develop a sense of efficacy that communicates itself to children with positive academic consequences (see Ada, 1988, for an excellent example of this pattern).

The teacher's role definitions associated with community participation can be characterized along a collaborative-exclusionary dimension. Teachers operating at the collaborative end of the continuum actively encourage minority parents to participate in promoting their children's academic progress both in the home and through involvement in classroom activities. A collaborative orientation may require a willingness on the part of the teacher to work closely with bilingual teachers or assistants in order to communicate effectively and in a non-condescending way with minority parents.

Teachers with an exclusionary orientation, on the other hand, tend to regard teaching as their job and are likely to view collaboration with minority parents as either irrelevant or actually detrimental to children's progress. Often parents are viewed as part of the problem since they interact though L1 with their children at home.

These attitudes reflect the ways in which teachers have defined their role with respect to minority children and communities. They have accepted rather than challenged the power structure within which the education of minority students takes place. These attitudes, communicated subtly but surely to students, contribute directly to the disabling of minority students within the classroom.

3. Pedagogy

Several investigators have suggested that the learning difficulties of minority students are often pedagogically-induced in that the children designated "at risk" frequently receive intensive instruction that confines them to a passive role and induces a form of "learned helplessness" (e.g. Coles, 1978; Cummins, 1984). Instruction that empowers students, on the other hand, will aim to liberate students from dependence on instruction in the sense of encouraging them to become active generators of their own knowledge.

Two major orientations can be distinguished with respect to pedagogy. These differ in the extent to which the teacher retains exclusive control over classroom interaction as opposed to sharing some of this control with students. The dominant instructional model in most western industrial societies has been termed a "transmission" (Barnes, 1976; Wells, 1986) or "banking" (Freire, 1973, 1983) model; this can be contrasted with an "interactive/experiential" model of pedagogy.

The basic premise of the transmission model is that the teacher's task is to impart knowledge or skills that she possesses to students who do not yet have these

skills. This implies that the teacher initiates and controls the interaction, constantly orienting it toward the achievement of instructional objectives.

It has been argued that a transmission model of teaching contravenes central principles of language and literacy acquisition and that a model allowing for reciprocal interaction between teachers and students represents a more appropriate alternative (Cummins, 1984; Wells, 1986). The basic tenet of the interactive/experiential model is that "talking and writing are means to learning" (Bullock Report, 1975: 50).

In short, pedagogical approaches that empower students encourage them to assume greater control over setting their own learning goals and to collaborate actively with each other in achieving these goals. The instruction is automatically "culture-fair" in that all students are actively involved in expressing, sharing, and amplifying their experience within the classroom (e.g. through cooperative learning groups). The approaches reflect what cognitive psychologists such as Piaget and Vygotsky have emphasized about children's learning for more than half a century. Learning is viewed as an active process that is enhanced through interaction. The stress on action (Piaget) and interaction (Vygotsky) contrasts with behavioristic pedagogical models that focus on passive and isolated reception of knowledge.⁵

The relevance of these two pedagogical models for bilingual/multicultural education derives from the fact that a genuine multicultural orientation is impossible within a transmission model of pedagogy. To be sure, content about other cultural groups can be transmitted, but appreciation of other cultural groups can come about only through interaction where experiences are being shared. Transmission models exclude, and therefore, effectively suppress, students' experiences. Consequently, these teacher-centered approaches do not allow for validation of minority students' experiences in the classroom. In this respect, transmission approaches operate in very much the same way as standardized tests. Minority student's experiences are systematically excluded from the curriculum and classroom just as items that might reflect culturally-specific experiences have no hope of making it into final versions of standardized IQ and achievement tests (see Cummins, 1984, for a description of how this discriminatory structure operates and is rationalized "scientifically").⁶

⁵The academic credibility of Gersten and Woodward can be gauged from their statement that the "bulk of the Canadian research [on French immersion] was with low-income students" (1985a: p.76) and their belief (1985b: p.83) that only five studies of French immersion programs had been conducted, four of them involving working-class families. In fact, by 1985, several hundred evaluations of French immersion programs had been conducted in Canada. Only a tiny fraction of these involved working-class students for the simple reason that very few working-class students have tended to enroll in French immersion programs [see Cummins and Swain, 1986].

⁶A detailed scheme for "A Chicano Pedagogy of Reconstruction" consistent with the more general interactive/experiential orientation outlined here has been elaborated by Raymond Padilla (1979).

4. Assessment

Historically, in many western countries, psychological assessment has served to legitimize the educational disabling of minority students by locating the academic "problem" within the student herself. This has had the effect of screening from critical scrutiny the subtractive nature of the school program, the exclusionary orientation of teachers towards minority communities, and transmission models of teaching that suppress students' experience and inhibit them from active participation in learning.

This process is virtually inevitable when the conceptual base for the assessment process is purely psychoeducational. If the psychologist's task (or role definition) is to discover the causes of a minority student's academic difficulties and the only tools at her disposal are psychological tests (in either L1 or L2), then it is hardly surprising that the child's difficulties are attributed to psychological dysfunctions. The myth of bilingual handicaps that still influences educational policy and practice was generated in exactly this way during the 1920's and 1930's.

The alternative role definition that is required to reverse the "legitimizing" function of assessment can be termed an "advocacy" orientation. The psychologist's or special educator's task must be to dismantle the traditional function of psychological assessment in the educational disabling of minority students; in other words, they must be prepared to become advocates for the child in scrutinizing critically the social and educational context within which the child has developed. This implies that the conceptual basis for assessment should be broadened so that it goes beyond psychoeducational considerations to take account of the child's entire learning environment. To challenge the disabling of minority students, the assessment must focus on the extent to which children's language and culture are incorporated within the school program, the extent to which educators collaborate with parents in a shared enterprise, and the extent to which children are encouraged to use language (both L1 and L2) actively within the classroom to amplify their experiences in interaction with other children and adults. In other words, the primary focus should be on remediating the educational interactions that minority children experience.

It is worth noting that assessment and pedagogy are closely linked in that classroom teachers have considerable opportunities to observe children undertaking a variety of cognitive and academic tasks when the instruction is individualized and interactional. This information can and should play an important role in assessment/placement decisions. Within a transmission model, when the instructional tasks are teacher-imposed rather than expressive of children's own experience, then the instruction tends to mirror the biases of standardized tests and consequently provides much less opportunity for observation of children's capacities.

EMPOWERING MINORITY STUDENTS

In summary, an advocacy approach to assessment of minority children will involve locating the pathology within the societal power relations between dominant and dominated groups, in the reflection of these power relations between school and communities, and in the mental and cultural disabling of minority students that takes place in classrooms.

CONCLUSION

I have argued that the fundamental causes of minority student's school failure are rooted in a sociohistorical process of minority group disempowerment. The ways in which schools have traditionally reflected the societal power structure and rationalized the educational disablement of minority students have been outlined and an intervention framework designed to reverse this pattern and prevent minority student's academic failure has been proposed.

It should be clear that implementation of empowerment pedagogy is unlikely to be facilitated by the dominant group because, almost by definition, empowerment pedagogy requires educators as individuals and schools as institutions to challenge the institutionalized racism that still persists in many aspects of society. Promotion of minority student's L1 is fiercely resisted because it confers some degree of individual and collective power on disempowered minorities. Similarly, for purposes of societal reproduction, indoctrination through transmission approaches to pedagogy is a more desirable outcome than empowerment and critical thinking that might give rise to direct challenges to the societal power structure.

The notion of empowerment is similar to what Johan Galtung (1980), the Norwegian peace researcher and Director of the Centre of International Studies at Princeton University, calls autonomy, which is defined as follows:

"Autonomy is here seen as power-over-oneself so as to be able to withstand what other might have of power-over-others. I use the distinction between ideological, remunerative and punitive power, depending on whether the influence is based on internal, positive external, or negative external sanctions. Autonomy then is the degree of 'inoculation' against these forms of power. These forms of power, exerted by means of ideas, carrots and sticks, can work only if the power receiver really receives the pressure, which presupposes a certain degree of submissiveness, dependency and fear, respectively. Their antidotes are self-respect, self-sufficiency, and fearlessness... 'self-respect' can be defined as 'confidence in one's own ideas and ability to set one's own goals', 'self-sufficiency' as the 'possibility of pursuing them with one's own means', and 'fearlessness', as 'the possibility of persisting despite threats of destruction... The opposite [of autonomy] is penetration, meaning that the outside has penetrated into one's self to the extent of creating submissiveness to ideas, dependency on 'goods' from the outside, and fear of the outside in terms of 'bads'". (1980: 58-59).

In the past, school and other societal institutions have promoted the internalization of submissiveness and dependency among minority students and communities by convincing them of their own inferiority, a process that results in a lack of power-oneself or what Galtung terms "autonomy". In Galtung's terms, empowerment pedagogy will be resisted by the dominant group because it results in self-respect, self-sufficiency and fearlessness; expressed in more conventional terms, it promotes minority students' self-esteem, ability for independent learning rather than learned helplessness, and confidence in their own academic and personal talents. By doing this, it reduces or eliminates the power of the dominant group to penetrate or control the formerly dominated minority group. Communities that are empowered are more likely to "create trouble" by protesting when they are sprayed with carcinogenic pesticides in the fields just as parents who are empowered are more likely to "create trouble" when their children are subjected to racism in schools.

This analysis of the bilingual education debate implies that the more empirical evidence is produced that empowerment bilingual programs result in personal and academic growth among minority students, the more vehement will be the denial of this evidence and the rejection of these programs by those among the dominant group committed to maintaining the current societal power structure. This is a very different relation between research and policy than that assumed by most policy-makers and researchers.

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⁷ It is worth noting that the change processes being implemented as part of the "educational reform" movement in the United States are likely to direct educators' role definitions towards interactions that disable minority students as a result of the fact that teachers themselves are being disempowered by means of pressure to continually increase students' standardized test scores. Transmission approaches involving the drilling of students in test-related content appear to have been reinforced as a result of "educational reform" in many contexts.

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