

3. In the third paragraph, Rowia states that students shouldn't forget their native language whether it is "Spanish, Vietnamese, or Urdu." Do you think she is advocating that bilingual programs be established for languages other than Spanish?
4. Evaluate Rowia's comparison of the right to learn other languages in school to the principles of bilingual education. How do you think Hayakawa, Morales, and Kuntz would respond to her statement?

A Nation Divided by One Language

James Crawford

Over the last five years, many states have overturned bilingual education programs in favor of "English Only" programs. Many opponents of bilingual education express concerns that bilingual programs are ineffective, prevent mainstreaming children into the educational system, and put children at a disadvantage. In the next article, bilingual education specialist James Crawford explains that overturning bilingual education programs has less to do with helping children, and more to do with the political and cultural fears of its opponents.

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1 "If you live in America, you need to speak English." According to a *Los Angeles Times* poll, that was how three out of four voters explained their support for Proposition 227, the 1998 ballot initiative that dismantled bilingual education in California. Many Arizonans cited the same reason for passing a similar measure (Proposition 203) last year.

2 Ambiguous as it is, this rationale offers some clues about the way Americans think about language. No doubt for some the statement has a patriotic subtext: one flag, one language. Rejecting bilingual education was a way to "send a message" that, in the United States, English and only English is appropriate for use in the public square.

3 Other voters merely seemed intent on restating the obvious. English is so dominant in the US that non-English speakers are at a huge disadvantage. Thus schools must not fail to teach English to children from minority language backgrounds. Students' life chances will depend to a large extent on the level of English literacy skills they achieve.

4 Immigrants have generally understood these truths more keenly than anyone, and behaved accordingly. As the linguist Einar Haugen observes, "America's profusion of tongues has made her a modern Babel, but a Babel in reverse."

5 There is no reason to think the historic pattern has changed. Although the number of minority language speakers has grown dramatically in recent years, thanks to

a liberalisation of immigration laws in 1965, so has their rate of acculturation. Census figures confirm the paradox. While one in seven US residents now speaks a language other than English at home, bilingualism is also on the rise. A century ago the proportion of non-English speakers was nearly five times as large. As the population becomes increasingly diverse, newcomers seem to be acquiring the national language more rapidly than ever before.

6 The political problem is that many Americans have trouble believing all this. One conservative organisation claims: "Tragically, many immigrants these days refuse to learn English! They never become productive members of society. They remain stuck in a linguistic and economic ghetto, many living off welfare and costing working Americans millions of tax dollars every year."

7 Such perceptions are not uncommon. Perhaps this is because Americans who came of age before the 1970s had little experience of linguistic diversity. Growing up in a period of tight immigration quotas, they seldom encountered anyone speaking a language other than English, except foreign tourists.

8 So today, when Spanish and Vietnamese are heard routinely in public and when bilingual government services in Tagalog and Gujarati are not unknown, some Americans conclude that the hegemony of English is threatened, and perhaps their "way of life" as well. Suddenly they are endorsing coercive measures, as suggested by the US English lobby, to "defend our common language". An English Only movement based on these premises came to prominence in the 80s. Thus far it has succeeded in legislating English as the official language of 23 states, although such declarations have been primarily symbolic, with few legal effects as yet.

9 The campaign's ideological effects have been more significant. In particular English Only agitation has made bilingual schooling a lightning rod for political attacks from people concerned about immigration policy, cultural change and the expansion of minority rights. Debating the best way to teach English to children becomes a form of shadow-boxing that has less to do with pedagogical issues than with questions of social status and political power.

10 It does not help that the pedagogical issues are so poorly understood. Monolinguals tend to regard language learning as a zero-sum game. Any use of children's mother tongue for instruction, the assumption goes, is a diversion from English acquisition. Thus assigning English learners to bilingual classrooms would seem to delay their education.

11 Research has shown that precisely the opposite is true. Far from a waste of learning time, native-language lessons support the process of acquiring a second language while keeping students from falling behind in other subjects.

12 Stephen Krashen, of the University of Southern California, has documented the "transfer" of literacy skills and academic knowledge between various languages even when alphabets differ substantially. "We learn to read by reading, by making sense of what we see on the page," Krashen explains. Thus "it will be much easier to learn to read in a language we already understand." And literacy need not be relearned as additional languages are acquired. "Once you can read, you can read."

13 Other studies confirm that by the time children leave well-structured bilingual programs, typically after four to five years, they are outperforming their counter-

parts in non-bilingual programs, and in some cases students from native-English backgrounds as well. Yet such success stories remain poorly publicised. Until recently bilingual educators have done little to explain their methods and goals, while the US media have become increasingly sceptical. "If all I knew about bilingual education was what I read in the newspapers," says Krashen, "I'd vote against it, too."

Mixed messages have compounded the public relations problem. Bilingual education, which began as an effort to guarantee equal educational opportunities, is increasingly promoted as a form of multicultural enrichment. To counter the English Only mentality, advocates have coined the slogan English Plus. They argue that the US remains an underdeveloped country where language skills are concerned. In a global economy more multilingualism, not less, would clearly advance the national interest.

Some English-speaking parents have been receptive to the "bilingual is beautiful" pitch. Over the past decade a growing number have enrolled their children in "dual immersion" classrooms alongside minority children learning English. Yet despite excellent reports on this method of cultivating fluency in two languages, more than 20,000 English-background students are participating. Compare that with the 300,000 Canadian anglophones in French immersion programmes, in a country with one-tenth the population of the US.

By and large English Plus appeals primarily to language educators and ethnic leaders—that is, to those who already value bilingual skills. Other Americans remain suspicious of the "plus." Most harbour the false impression that bilingual education is primarily about maintaining Hispanic culture. Knowing a foreign language is wonderful, they say, but shouldn't English come first? The US language policy debate rarely seems to get past that question.

THINKING CRITICALLY

1. In paragraph 2, Crawford states that the argument that "if you live in America, you need to speak English," offers some clues about the way Americans think about language. What clues does he think this attitude reveals about language? Explain.
2. What is the author's position on the issue of bilingual education? At what point in his essay is his position clear?
3. Crawford observes that some Americans who are against bilingual education feel that "immigrants these days refuse to learn English." What is the author's position on this belief? Have you heard this argument made in educational, academic, and political discussion? Do you think it is a valid point? Why or why not?
4. According to the author, what are the real political issues behind opposition to bilingual education?
5. What is the relationship between bilingual education and multiculturalism? How has multiculturalism hurt the bilingual movement?

My Spanish Standoff

Gabriella Kuntz

Whereas much of the bilingual education controversy whirs around the language of the classroom, there is another side to the issue—the language spoken in the home. In the next essay, Gabriella Kuntz explains why she chose not to teach her children Spanish or to allow the language to be spoken in the home. In her opinion, English is the language of opportunity, power, and acceptance. Witnessing firsthand the differences between how English-speaking and Spanish-speaking people were treated, she decided to make English the only language spoken in her home, with some surprising reactions from her children. Kuntz, a retired elementary-school teacher, was born in Peru, but lived most of her life in America. This essay appeared in the "My Turn" column of the May 4, 1998, issue of *Newsweek*.

1 Once again my 17-year-old daughter comes home from a foreign-language fair at her high school and accusingly tells me about the pluses of being able to speak two languages. Speaker after speaker has extolled the virtues of becoming fluent in another language. My daughter is frustrated by the fact that I'm bilingual and have purposely declined to teach her to speak Spanish, my native tongue. She is not the only one who has wondered why my children don't speak Spanish. Over the years friends, acquaintances and family have asked me the same question. Teachers have asked my children. My family, of course, has been more judgmental.

2 I was born in Lima, Peru, and came to the United States for the first time in the early '50s, when I was 6 years old. At the parochial school my sister and I attended in Hollywood, Calif., there were only three Hispanic families at the time. I don't know when or how I learned English. I guess it was a matter of survival. My teacher spoke no Spanish. Neither did my classmates. All I can say is that at some point I no longer needed to translate. When I spoke in English I thought in English, and when I spoke in Spanish I thought in Spanish. I also learned about peanut-butter-and-jelly sandwiches, Halloween and Girl Scouts.

3 We went to a high school in Burbank. Again, there were few Hispanic students at the time. My sister and I spoke English without an "accent." This pleased my father no end. He would beam with pleasure when teachers, meeting him and my mother for the first time and hearing their labored English, would comment that they had no idea English was not our native tongue.

4 My brother was born in Los Angeles in 1959, and we would speak both English and Spanish to him. When he began to talk, he would point to an object and say its name in both languages. He was, in effect, a walking, talking English-Spanish dictionary. I have often wondered how his English would have turned out, but circumstances beyond our control prevented it.

5 Because of political changes in Peru in the early '60s (my father being a diplomat), we had to return to Peru. Although we had no formal schooling in Spanish, we were able to communicate in the language. I was thankful my parents had in-