

3. Look again at the figure. Does the vast difference between the degree of mothers' satisfaction in Asian and American mothers surprise you? Shock you? Do you think this study will affect your behavior as a parent? Why or why not?
4. What should be done to improve American students' math (and science) skills?

"To Succeed, Learn in English"

BARBARA MUJICA

Educated at UCLA, the University of Mexico, the Sorbonne, and New York University (Ph.D.), Barbara Mujica (b. 1943) has been a professor of Spanish at Georgetown University for twenty years. Mujica has written many articles and books, including studies of Spanish literature, novels, and short stories; her publications include works in both Spanish and English. Mujica is an advocate of mainstreaming second-language students as quickly as possible, as this article, published in the *Washington Post* in 1995, reveals.

¹ The White House response to Sen. Robert Dole's call to make English the official language of the United States was high on knee-jerk political correctness and low on common sense. White House spokeswoman Ginny Terzano said Dole's proposal was "not realistic because so many young students don't speak English, and in order to communicate with their teachers and reach full competency in their courses they have to be taught in Spanish" or other languages. Actually, a longitudinal study published in October 1994 by the New York City Board of Education shows that the opposite is true: Students who are taught in English from the beginning have higher scores in reading and math than those taught in their native language.

² New York City employs two methods to teach LEP (limited English proficiency) students. Bilingual education uses the student's native language for content instruction. This means students spend most of the day in classes taught in their native language. ESL (English as a second language) uses English as

the medium of instruction, but students are not simply immersed in the language. Instead, they are taught by a specially trained instructor who uses "controlled" or limited English to introduce new aspects of the language systematically.

³ The longitudinal study demonstrates that students who receive ESL instruction fare far better than those taught primarily in their native language. A comparison of the three-year exit rates for students in ESL and bilingual programs shows that those who receive ESL instruction test out faster and in higher percentages than those who receive instruction in their native language, regardless of the grade in which they entered school. For example, 79.3 percent of the children who entered ESL programs in kindergarten tested out, while only 51.5 percent of those who received their education in their native languages did. Likewise, 72.9 percent of the ESL students who entered programs in the first grade tested out, while only 38.5 of those in bilingual programs did. For students who entered LEP programs in the ninth grade, 91.6 percent of those in native-language instruction classes still hadn't tested out after three years, as compared with 78.1 percent of those in ESL classes.

⁴ Furthermore, children who had been in ESL classes tested higher in English and math once they exited LEP programs than those who had received native-language instruction. Of the LEP students who entered in kindergarten or the first grade, 49 percent of those who had been in ESL classes eventually read at grade level, while only 32 percent of those who had been in bilingual classes performed that well. In math, the statistics are even more impressive. Of the children who entered in kindergarten or the first grade, more than 69 percent of those who had been in ESL classes eventually performed at grade level or above, as opposed to 54 percent of those who had been in bilingual classes.

⁵ Naturally, the study provoked a barrage of criticism from the highly political and vocal bilingual lobby, which prompted the New York City Board of Education to issue a paper in November 1994 mitigating the findings of the study and ignoring the distinction between students in ESL and bilingual education programs. Rather than exit rates, this paper focuses on the achievement of LEP students *during* the period in which they are in bilingual or ESL classes. The authors show that although

the scores of LEP students were below average on the English-language test, their scores in all areas showed improvement; they point out that in math, there were insufficient data on the progress of LEP students to draw valid conclusions.

However, a report on citywide mathematics test results in New York in the spring of 1995 deals more fully with the math scores of the 26,248 students who were examined the previous school year in Chinese, Spanish, or Haitian Creole. According to this document, only 16.6 percent of these children were performing at or above grade level in mathematics. Although this figure represents an improvement of 1.1 percent over the scores of the previous year, it discredits the argument that native-language instruction keeps performing at grade level in subject areas. Although LEP students are *improving* faster than the national norm, they continue to *perform* far below the norm.

Several other studies also demonstrate that LEP students taught in English do just as well or better than those taught in their native language. In El Paso, Tex., a longitudinal evaluation shows that young children in the "bilingual immersion" program, which uses English as the language of instruction from the first day of the first grade, actually do better in math and reading than those taught in their native language. In addition to bilingual immersion, many other new programs that combine English with subject-area instruction have been developed.

Clearly, it is not necessary to teach LEP children in their native language, and doing so may actually be detrimental to their academic achievement. Furthermore, by isolating children into language ghettos in school, we discourage contact with English-speaking youngsters who could facilitate newcomers' socialization into American society and contribute to their mastery of English. It is simply common sense that students who are taught in English will learn the language more quickly and qualify for mainstreaming earlier than those who are not. And it is common sense to use methods that produce positive results in the classroom.

Expanding Vocabulary

Examine the following words in their contexts in the essay and then write a brief definition or synonym for each one. (Do not use a dictionary; try to guess each word's meaning from its context.)

proficiency (2)
immersed (2)
barrage (5)
mitigating (5)

discredits (6)
detrimental (8)
facilitate (8)

Understanding Subject and Purpose

1. What is Mujica's subject? What two groups of students does she contrast?
2. Explain the difference between bilingual education and ESL.
3. What is Mujica's purpose in writing? What is her thesis?
4. Explain New York City's longitudinal study in a way that establishes the contrast between the two groups of students. What additional contrasts are shown in the 1995 study and in the El Paso evaluations?
5. How did New York City try to duck the controversy caused by their study? Why did they do this?

Examining Strategies and Style

1. Examine the author's opening paragraph. What does she use as an attention-getter? Into what context does she put her discussion?
2. In paragraph 1, Mujica asserts that the White House response is low on common sense. Where does she pick up on this idea again? What makes this an effective strategy?
3. The author explains the abbreviations LEP and ESL. What does this tell you about her expected audience? For what audience would she *not* identify the abbreviations?
4. In paragraph 6, the words *improving* and *perform* are in italics. Why does the author want to call attention to these words? What important distinction do they make?

Responding to the Writer's Ideas

1. Have you had any experience, personally or through acquaintances, with either bilingual or ESL education? If so, how does your experience correspond to the studies reported by Mujica? Are the studies consistent with your experience? If not, how does your experience differ?
2. Were you aware, before reading this article, of the degree of politics involved in bilingual education? Why do so many educational issues become so political? Can you explain why New York City would want to cover up the results of the studies cited?

3. Should second-language students be immersed in English and mainstreamed into regular classes in English as quickly as possible? Why or why not?

"Pedestrian Students and High-Flying Squirrels"

LIANE ELLISON NORMAN

Liane Ellison Norman (b. 1937), now a peace educator and author of *Hammer of Justice: Molly Rush and the Plowshares Eight* (1990), obtained a Ph.D. in literature from Brandeis University and taught journalism and literature at the University of Pittsburgh. In her essay, published in 1978 in *Center* magazine, Norman reflects on her journalism students by drawing an analogy with squirrels.

1 The squirrel is curious. He darts and edges, profile first, one bright black eye on me, the other alert for his enemies on the other side. Like a fencer, he faces both ways, for every impulse toward me an impulse away. His tail is airy. He flicks and flourishes it, taking readings of some subtle kind.

2 I am enjoying a reprieve of warm sun in a season of rain and impending frost. Around me today is the wine of the garden's final ripening. On the zucchini, planted late, the flagrant blossoms flare and decline in a day's time.

3 I am sitting on the front porch thinking about my students. Many of them earnestly and ardently want me to teach them to be hacks. Give us ten tricks, they plead, ten nifty fail-safe ways to write a news story. Don't make us think our way through these problems, they storm (and when I am insistent that thinking is the trick, "You never listen to us," they complain.) Who cares about the First Amendment? they sneer. What are John Peter Zenger and Hugo Black to us? Teach us how to earn a living. They will be content, they explain, with know-how and jobs, satisfied to do no more than cover the tedium of school board and weather.

4 Under the rebellion, there is a plaintive panic. What if, on the job—assuming there is a job to be on—they fearlessly de-

fend the free press against government, grand jury, and media monopoly, but don't know how to write an obituary. Shouldn't obituaries come first?

5 I hope not, but even obituaries need good information and firm prose, and both, I say, require clear thought.

6 The squirrel does not share my meditation. He grows tired of inquiring into me. His dismissive tail floats out behind as he takes a running leap into the tree. Up the bark he goes and onto a branch, where he crashes through the leaves. He soars from slender perch to slender perch, shaking up the tree as if he were the west wind. What a madcap he is, to go racing from one twig that dips under him to another at those heights!

7 His acrobatic clamor loosens buckeyes in their prickly armor. They drop, break open, and he is down the tree in a twinkling, picking, choosing. He finds what he wants and carries it, an outside nut which is burnished like a fine cello, across the lawn, up a pole, and across the treetop telephone line to the other side, where he disappears in maple foliage.

8 Some inner clock or calendar tells him to stock his larder against the deep snows and hard times that are coming. I have heard that squirrels are fuzzy-minded, that they collect their winter groceries and store them, and then forget where they are cached. But this squirrel is purposeful; he appears to know he'd better look ahead. Faced with necessity, he is prudent, but not fearful. He prances and flies as he goes about his task of preparation, and he never fails to look into whatever startles his attention.

9 Though he is not an ordinary pedestrian, crossing the street far above, I sometimes see the mangled fur of a squirrel on the street, with no flirtation left. Even a high-flying squirrel may zap himself on an aerial live wire. His days are dangerous and his winters are lean, but still he lays in provisions the way a trapeze artist goes about his work, with daring and dash.

10 For the squirrel, there is no work but living. He gathers food, reproduces, tends the children for a while, and stays out of danger. Doing these things with style is what distinguishes him. But for my students, unemployment looms as large as the horizon itself. Their anxiety has cause. And yet, what good is it? Ten tricks or no ten tricks, there are not enough jobs. The well-trained, well-educated stand in line for unemployment