

Bilingual Education: A Perennial Cultural Contention

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Abstract

The controversy surrounding Bilingual Education is a subset of the Cultural War. Many authors note that Bilingual Education is embroiled in controversy, but all leave the cause, scope, and nature of the controversy unspecified fully. We see, in general, Education being embroiled in the conflict between a Common Culture and a Dominant Culture Worldview (Weltaanschauungen). A parallel controversy is the intention behind public education. Is education for ingraining compliance or advancing critical thinking? Cultural Worldview has been shown to have explanatory power in service prioritization (Peter, S., et al., 2021). There are several scholars that link Language, Culture, and Consciousness or Cognition. One Linguistic Theory states unequivocally that Worldview, as Culture, is inextricably linked to Language. Other dichotomies are involved, such as, particularization and universalization of language curricula. There is the view that government, Federal to Local, has entered into the Cultural Maintenance business, not necessarily extending educational opportunities. In fact, some opine that Government has established Special Rights, not simply enforcing the same Rights through language curricula. Implicit throughout this paper is the idea that Bilingual Education (BE) is not an ideological spoil of the Culture War. Moreover, Cultural Maintenance is not the responsibility of government, but that of the specific cultural members themselves, despite the legal requirements foisted upon government. Moreover, the conflict surrounding Bilingual Education is the result of the Left's weaponization of language itself and language curricula in general. With respect to the latter, it is just another avenue the Left uses to advance its Worldview.

Keywords: Bilingual Education, Culture War, Controversy, Dominant Culture, Common Culture, Worldview, Cultural Maintenance

The Bilingual Education Controversy

First, Bilingual Education (“BE”) is fraught with oppositional beliefs, non-rational attitudes, political presuppositions, and contradictory policy directives. BE uses the theory of Praxeology, which seeks to study human behavior as a purposeful behavior; there is a dynamic tension between the particularization and universalization of the term BE. This challenges the notion of a single purpose actuating BE. BE is not a unity, but has different configurations and aims (Hurajova, 2015). The contention among BE programmatic configurations and aims is a subset of political ideological perspectives. This ever-present layer of political division is the reactor that fuels any BE controversy (Hartig, 2020). In the United States, the term BE refers to a specific model of BE, which is teaching school subjects in two languages with the students’ L1 being used predominantly (Pan, Yi-chun & Pan, Yi-ching. 2010), and the teacher being, more often than not, a native speaker of Spanish. Spanish and English are the L1 and L2 languages respectively in U.S. schools’ BE programs predominantly. In the second instance, BE is universalized by a “one-size-fits-all” attitude. This has to do with budgetary constraints mostly. Further, McCarty (2012) states that there are “Weak” and “Strong” forms of BE. He also states that there are “varying purposes” behind the

wide variety of BE programs. However, the main conflict is between the Weak-Transitional, which aims to assimilate, and Strong-Maintenance/Heritage, which has the three aims of maintenance, pluralism, and enrichment (McCarty). Wiley et al. (2014) describes the BE controversy as, “Educational language policy in the country is largely the result of widely held beliefs and values about immigrants and patriotism. Language policies, implicit or explicit, are used to influence and control social behavior, and the U.S. is no different.”

Second, a major issue for BE is legal. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI) and Equal Educational Opportunities Act (EEOA) both state that schools are legally obligated to take “affirmative steps” to overcome any student’s Limited English Proficiency (“LEP”) to increase their effective participation and enjoyment of schooling (See also, Department of Health and Human Services, Office for Civil Rights, Document Number 00-22140, 65 FR 52762, pages 52762-52774, and U.S. Supreme Court Case, *Lau v. Nichols*, 414 U.S. 563 (1974)). By law, schools are required to accommodate all primary languages of its students. Providing BE to the 7,139 Living Languages in the World would be unimaginable (number from “Languages of the World”, *Ethnologue, Living Languages Report*, 2021). However, even if the scope of BE offerings were limited to the Top 10 Languages (number of speakers worldwide) (Mandarin, English, Hindustani, Spanish, Russian, Arabic, Bengali, Portuguese, Indonesian, and French), the cost

would still be exorbitant and the curricula, as the codification of aims, still be fraught with controversy. Established BE programs are apparently the outcome of strident language minorities taking schools to task on behalf of their LEP children.

Third, there are many suppositions or underpinning theories, beliefs, or attitudes implicit in the BE controversy, which need to be made explicit in order to understand the BE controversy more fully. The BE controversy is a microcosm for a larger conflict; it is a deceptive attenuation of public understanding and debate. To begin, Mcleod (1970) states, “Vygotsky's sociocultural theory views human development as a socially mediated process in which children acquire their cultural values, beliefs, and problem-solving strategies through collaborative dialogues with more knowledgeable members of society”. In regard to BE, “knowledgeable members”, refers to teachers obviously. There are several other scholars who link Language and Culture intimately. Alias (2016), introducing Wilhelm Von Humboldt’s (1767 – 1835) link of Language and Culture, states, “Language is part of culture. In fact, it is the basic tool of learning. It represents our worldview and expresses the specific features of national mentality.” Expressed strongly, Von Humboldt believed that Language and Culture are inextricable. More specifically, “Thought and language are therefore one and inseparable from each other” (Losonsky, 1999). Mernagh (n.d.) states, “Language is intrinsically connected and interrelated in a complex and intricate way with culture... This is made evident

through the work of Kramsch (1998) in her focus on ‘cultural reality’”. Related, the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis, states that language is not only a means to express thought, but to shape it as well. Language, by and large, is viewed as a descriptive tool. The Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis states that language is deterministic as well. Different cultures speak different languages; therefore they perceive reality differently. Language is not only to describe how reality can be represented in words (Perception), but what can be said about reality at all or ontologically or epistemologically. Stalmaszczyk, (2009) in his essay citing Ray Jackendoff’s “Language, Consciousness, Culture. Essays on Mental Structure.”; further elaborates on the necessary integration of the three mental processes. Language is more than a War of Words for the Left; it is the key to their Mind-Controlling, Culture-Shifting, and Gramscian-Marxism. BE is not just about language teaching or LEP students’ successful assimilation; it is the forward edge of the battle area (FEBA) for mind control and manipulation, and their social level equivalents, in order to create a certain — Socialist — culture. Leftists not only understand the importance of the linkage among language, consciousness, and culture; but exploit it to gain the upper hand in the Culture War, hence, their vigilance and vehemence about BE. Dr. Jordan Peterson stated that, “...you're [the Leftists] trying to gain linguistic supremacy in the area of public discourse...”. (LBC, 2018)

Fourth, Language in general, and Language education specifically, has been used by the Left, vis-à-vis Gramscian-Marxism, as the revolutionary strategy and tactic in the Culture War. From this perspective, the BE controversy is a part of the broader political discourse or discord between the Right and the Left, Republicans and Democrats respectively (See Pew Research Center, June, 2016, “Partisanship and Political Animosity in 2016”). A point of possible agreement between the Right and Left could be viewing BE as a means for Social Mobility, when operated as the Transitional Model of BE. However, Social Mobility is where any possible agreement ends. The Left wants to use Language, and Language Distribution Outlets, as a means to transform society to their liking. For the Left, this refers to a tactic for “Moving the Overton Window” (Neo, N., 2019, July 14, “The left, language, and political change”). Another tactic used by the Left is “Repressive Toleration”, or obversely, Liberating Tolerance. “This ‘liberating tolerance’ involves ‘the withdrawal of toleration of speech and assembly from groups and movements’ on the Right, and the aggressively partisan promotion of speech, groups, and progressive movements on the Left (pp. 81, 100).” (Kersch, n.d.).

The progenitor of Linguistics as revolutionary means was the Italian Communist Antonio Gramsci (See also, “Our Word is Our Weapon”, Juana Ponce de Leon (Ed.)). He was a linguist and, “...is credited with the blueprint that has served as the foundation for the Cultural Marxist movement in modern America.

Later dubbed by 1960s German student activist Rudi Dutschke as “the long march through the institutions,” (Thomas, 2020). According to Thomas, Gramsci’s overall goal was to fight a “war of position”, which would “...subvert Western culture from the inside in an attempt to compel it to redefine itself (Thomas).”

Edward Sapir (1884-1939) and Benjamin Lee Whorf (1897-1941) developed the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis, which professes “...a principle suggesting that the structure of a language affects its speakers' worldview or cognition, and thus people's perceptions are relative to their spoken language.” (Linguistic relativity, Wikipedia) The Left believes that the hidden goal of BE is the displacement of the LEP student’s native language (L1), and culture consequently. The Left believes that the true aims of education, and as an accessory BE, are to perpetuate Capitalism by conditioning students, and in turn, produce non-critical thinking workers with enough language proficiency to receive and act on instructions from superiors. A related, overarching aim is to mainstream everyone into the extractive and exploitative Capitalistic Culture. Their Moving the Overton Window is their main response; the window moves between “more free” and “less free (Wikipedia, Overton window, 2021). Another, spectrum used with the Overton Window is “No Government Regulation” to “Total Government control” (The Mackinac Center for Public Policy [The Mackinac Center], 2020). According to Joseph G. Lehman, President of The Mackinac Center, “...anything that gets the idea out in the open so

that it can be discussed and debated has the potential to shift the [Overton] Window.” (Lehman, 2020). However, the Overton Window would be at odds with Marcuse’s Repressive Tolerance tactic on this point, which states that the Left should not be tolerant of anything it deems repressive.

The Left uses historical injustices to shame or guilt the Right into silence. The interpretation of historical events, often out of context or one-sided, provides evidence for the Left’s Cultural Marxist agenda. The historical victims are depicted as clean-handed. The depiction removes any discussion or debate about Human Nature. In the case of BE as re-education, the cause célèbre for Leftists would be the infamous Indian Boarding School Policy of the 19th Century. These boarding schools were a direct result of the “Indian Civilization Act Fund of March 3, 1819”. In short, the Left sees Strong-Maintenance/Heritage as the only valid form of BE to be tolerated (US Indian Boarding School History, n.d.).

Conclusion

The Left wants to control Language and Language Distribution outlets (i.e., Educational Institutions, [Social] Media, and Government). In fact, it wants Government to use and enforce its narratives. Dr. Wade Nobles gave the motivation for this impetus. To paraphrase, power is not only defining what is reality, but making other persons believe that your definition is theirs truly (Dr.

Wade W. Nobles, n.d.). Ironically, the Left is looking for a delusionary goal; they believe they are fighting tyranny and not doing it a la the anti-fascists on their side. Further, the Left is pursuing Gramscian-Marxism by focusing its efforts on the Superstructure and not the Base as in Classical Marxism; this is the shift from Classic-Marxism to Gramscian-Marxism. Focusing on the Superstructure means “Everything not directly to do with production, [which, namely includes: Art, Family, Culture, Religion, Philosophy, Law, Media, Politics, Science, and Education – all in the realm of Ideology]” (Cole, 2020). Language is part-and-parcel of Ideology (Gerald, 2021). For Gramsci, Hegemony was a form of control through a society’s Superstructure as opposed to its Base or Social Relations of Production of a predominantly economic character. (Zeinelabdin, Hegemony in Gramsci, “State and Civil Society”, p. 2) Gramsci saw Education as Hegemony too. There is more happening in the BE controversy than meets the eye. In a real sense, the Culture War is fought in the arena of BE. There are several underlying theories, attitudes, and beliefs that elucidate the controversy surrounding BE programs. Cast in terms of Liberalism and Conservatism, the controversy seems inevitable, intractable, and at a continual impasse. The controversy surrounding BE, writ large, is the Culture War between the Left and the Right. Many Leftist thinkers' writings are suffused in the somewhat opaque substrate of the Culture

War. Not recognizing their contribution to the BE controversy will make an already intractable debate worse.

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