

From before the 1800's there have been multiple debates on Bilingual Education. This rapid change of thoughts on Bilingual Education has been influenced by society. When the first immigrants came in 1845-1854 there was a huge uproar in what language students were supposed to learn in. Many immigrant children were forced to leave their native language and culture behind. The American government wanted their nation to be equalized under one native language, which was English. Following that, the issue of Native Americans came into play in the United States. Richard Pratt, a leader in this field, sent Indian children to boarding school away from their native culture, which were believed as corrupt. The students had to act, behave, and socialize to follow a particular code of action. Society again oppressed the rights of Bilingual Education with a few key events in U.S. history, such as the new wave of immigrants in the beginning of the 20th century, both World Wars, and September 11th.

There were times throughout all these events where there were some breakthroughs in Bilingual Education, through laws and acts passed as well as new programs imposed. In the 1940's there was in expansion of the programs, English as a Second Language (ESL). In the 1960's is when the biggest steps were made. In 1964 the Civil Rights Act was passed, which stated that, "a student has a right to meaningful and effective instruction." Next the Bilingual Education Acts of 1968 and 1974, "Provided supplemental funding for school districts interested in establishing funding for school districts interested in establishing programs to meet the 'special educational needs' of large numbers of children of limited English speaking ability in the United States.

These laws have played a huge role in the controversy that is happening before our eyes today.



Pros

- It is the most effective way to teach students with limited English proficiency. Bilingual schools don't only aim to teach English, but also math, science, history, and etc. If these other subjects were taught in English, a language these students don't fully comprehend yet, the content would be completely lost.
- Those who attend bilingual schools have much to offer from their diverse set of languages and various cultural backgrounds.
- It is easier for students to learn English if they are literate in their first language. They use their first language as a springboard.
- Offers an alternative to total English immersion where students would fall behind early in their education, become discouraged, and simply drop out once they got to high school.

Cons

- It is more costly to run bilingual classes than it is to run single-language classes.
- Bilingual education allows for these citizens to resist assimilation, avoiding learning the dominant language.
- The students are bound to become confused and disoriented, as they are being pulled between two languages and worlds.



With the recent inauguration of our nation's 44th president, there is much reason for hope and change in today's education system. One of President Obama's main focuses in education is in the realm of languages, not simply for non-english speaking students and bilingual education, but for all.

Taking the "why can't everyone just speak English?" issue to a whole new level, Obama shifts the focus to the question of how we, as a society of mainly monolingual citizens, will measure up in this increasingly multilingual and multicultural world: "I wish, for once, that we could say that we support bilingual education because we want all of our citizens to be bilingual. If that were actually the case then Transitional Programs would probably not be our priority. We would focus our energy on expanding dual-immersion programs, in which English-speakers and speakers of another language would be mixed together in order for both groups to become bilingual." (insert footnote here!!!)

Given the climate of today's economy, it only seems reasonable to expand our curriculum to what is becoming and will continue to become increasingly more important: the communication with other nations and peoples. Obama recognizes this, and aims to make these students with English as their second language something to aspire to. (<http://bilingualtalk.blogspot.com/2008/05/obamas-agenda-for-bilingual-education.html>)

