

A Comparative Account of the Bilingual Education Programs in Malaysia and the United States

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Abstract

This paper looks at major challenges encountered in the stipulation and implementation of bilingual education in Malaysia and the United States. It analyses in a comparative manner the language history and profile; the rationale and types of bilingual programs; the challenges faced in the development and implementation of bilingual programs in the aspects of linguistic perception and resources; and the general solutions to overcome the problems. With respect to the linguistic situation, English has a strong influence on the society in the two countries, with English holding a much higher position in the United States. Bilingual education in Malaysia is geared more towards the maintenance of the mother tongue than the one in the United States. The United States' bilingual program is more transitional in nature, although there are some schools that conduct maintenance programs. Some of the problems faced by the two countries are linguistic perception, shortage of teachers, lack of materials and the allocation of funds. Both countries embark on the same solutions to the problems. To improve the linguistic perception, the media plays a significant role by holding a system-wide public relation campaign to reduce linguistic competition. Availability of resources is made easily accessible by the two countries so that there is an increase in number and amount. These two countries accept constructive criticisms on their existing bilingual education programs; evaluation of this nature could ensure the best bilingual education for all.

Keywords: bilingual education, linguistics, challenges, immigrants, implementations, problems.

Introduction

'Bilingual education' generally signifies education where two distinct languages are used for general teaching. Its programs aim at easing the non-English or native speaker into the English academic environment by teaching content classes in the native language (Freeman, 1996). One of the exceptional reasons for advocating bilingual education is the sense of integration and equality, aside from gaining the means to communicate socially. When students are fluent in the language which is used in the mainstream society, the students are able to integrate and feel connected to their peers as well as the society.

When students who are learning the second language are pulled out of their mainstream classrooms and taken to other classrooms to learn in the native language, social integration is disrupted. Therefore, in order to receive equal education, both the student's native language has to be valued in a visible way through school programs. According to Freeman (1996) most dual language programs are created to develop native like proficiency in a second language while maintaining fluency in the first language.

The teaching and learning of another language other than the medium of instruction are commonly used by schools in countries that practice bilingual education. Some of the aims of bilingual education are to uphold the language rights, maintain the cultural values, upgrade the educational attainment and reduce school-dropouts of the diverse population. Countries of diverse population are bound to face intense language education problems, especially in the aspects of language choice, use and implementation. These countries encountered conflicts and difficulties in planning the most suitable language policy. This is particularly so in areas where there is competition between the language of the colonizers and the languages of the indigenous people; or in areas where there is a language conflict between the languages of the majority and the minority population. Hence, this paper intends to examine the problems encountered by Malaysia and the United States in an attempt to provide the best language education, particular bilingual education to the students.

These two countries are chosen as the basis for comparison because English plays a significant role in their educational systems and allows the provision for the use of mother tongue. Thus, this led to the establishment of bilingual education programs. Specifically, the purpose of this study is to examine the major challenges encountered in the provision and implementation of bilingual education in Malaysia and the United States. It is to analyse in a comparative manner the language history and profile; the rationale and types of bilingual programs; the challenges faced in the development and implementation of bilingual programs in the aspect of linguistic perception and resources; and the general solutions to overcome the problems. This paper will first discuss the linguistic situations in each country and then analyze comparatively so as to establish similarities and differences. The research questions for this study are as follows: (1) What is the linguistic history and profile of Malaysia and the United States?; (2) What are the rationale and types of bilingual education programs available in Malaysia and the United States?; (3) What are the problems encountered in the provision and implementation of bilingual education in Malaysia and the United States in terms of: (i) linguistic perception (ii) availability of teachers, (iii) availability of materials, (iv) availability of funds; and (4) What are the general solutions to the above problems present in Malaysia and the United States?

Linguistic Situation in Malaysia

Malaysia is one of the countries in the Malay Archipelago. It has thirteen states; the nine states in Peninsular Malaysia and the two states in East Malaysia are separated by the South China Sea. It has a population of approximately 19 million; 59% Malays, 32% Chinese and 9% Indians. The Malaysian educational structure is featured by six years of

primary education, five years of secondary education and two years of sixth form education.

1) Linguistic history and profile of Malaysia

Bahasa Malaysia (Malay language) has long been the language of communication in the Malay Archipelago. It fulfills the function of the language of trade, so over time a kind of variety developed. This is specifically referred to as Bazaar Malay and is mainly used by the Chinese and Indians - the non-native speakers of the language. The impact of British rule and influence of the English language in Malaysia began with the acquisition of Penang Island (northern Peninsular) in 1786, at which time the population of Peninsular Malaysia was predominantly Malays. As the British influence and suzerainty gradually spread in the peninsular during the second half of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, the demographic pattern of the country changed. This came about with the immigration of the Chinese to work in tin mines, and the Indians of South India (mainly Tamil speakers) to work on the newly established rubber plantations. At present, the people of Malaysia consists mainly of Malay speakers, Chinese speakers (Mandarin, Hokkien, Cantonese, Teochew) and Tamil speakers. Having been under the British influence, English is not alien to Malaysians and is widely used in business sectors. The languages of instruction in Malaysia are Bahasa Malaysia (Malay language), English, Mandarin and Tamil. Bahasa Malaysia, the national and official language is the medium of instruction in most public schools. English, which is the "second most language" (Asmah, 1982) serves as a tool of getting technological information. It is a compulsory language to learn and is taught as a subject. Chinese and Tamil schools use Mandarin and Tamil as the mediums of instruction respectively.

2) Rationale and types of bilingual education in Malaysia

Bilingual education itself is not openly advocated, but the national education system is a catalyst for bilingualism (Asmah, 1982). In other words bilingualism is a language policy which is implicitly sanctioned. The rationale for bilingual education is mirrored in the Malaysian constitution which says that Bahasa Malaysia is a national and official language and that no one is to prevent anybody from speaking and teaching other languages. The main emphasis in the Malaysian education system is more on the acquisition of Bahasa Malaysia and English as the languages of education. The acquisition of the mother tongue of the people is more geared toward maintenance of native languages and cultural heritage.

Bilingual education in Malaysia can be described in terms what main language instruction is provided in schools. The mainstream schools (Malay medium) provide language instruction in Bahasa Malaysia. English is a compulsory subject and is introduced in the first grade. English is not only a compulsory subject to learn, but it is also used as a medium of instruction in the teaching of Mathematics and Science effective January 2003 (Pillay & Thomas, 2003). For students whose mother tongue is not Bahasa Malaysia, they can opt to take Pupils' Own Language, Mandarin or Tamil. In the Chinese medium schools, the language of instruction is Mandarin. Bahasa Malaysia and English are the compulsory subjects that students must learn, and are introduced in

the third grade. In the Tamil medium schools, the medium of instruction is Tamil. Bahasa Malaysia and English are compulsory subjects, and are introduced in the third grade. Students who attend Chinese and Tamil schools at the elementary level, before going to secondary schools will have to attend a year of transition classes which is specifically called 'remove class'. This is to prepare them for mainstream Bahasa Malaysia secondary schools. Chinese and Tamil schools at secondary level are not given attention to in Malaysia.

3) Problems encountered in the stipulation and implementation of bilingual education in Malaysia in terms of: i) linguistic perception ii) availability of teachers iii) availability of materials and iv) availability of funds

The perception of the Malaysian society towards the use of a particular language other than the mother tongue is mixed; some have positive perception and attitude towards the use of other language (i.e. English), while others hold the opposite view. For the majority of Malays, Bahasa Malaysia is the language that they had fought for to replace English as the medium of instruction. Realizing the importance of English creates a dilemma among Malay educators and politicians whether or not it should be given emphasis. There exists a group who prefers English and there are others who oppose it. This is especially the case between Malays who were English educated during the British era and those who were Malay educated. The Chinese have a more positive attitude towards English. However, there are differences of opinion among the Chinese towards English. Chinese who are English educated speak more English than the Chinese dialects, much to the criticisms of the Chinese educated individuals. The overall perceptions of Indians towards English are also positive, because there exist many among Indians who see little economic value in Tamil. Besides, they communicate among themselves largely in English.

Ozog (1992) sees the role of English in Malaysian education policy and its relationship with the National Language as a problem. He focuses on a dilemma by politicians and language planners: "If English is important then their people must have access to it, and yet, to admit its importance undermines, in their eyes at least, the status of the National Language." (1990:313). Nik Safiah (1987: 5) is quoted in detail:

Malay faces stiff competition from English. While the policy is to use the national language in all official instances, in many important domains of language...English is still the preferred language. Such being the case, Malay cannot remain forever a language of basic communication. It has to become a language by means of which complex ideas and feelings are communicated effectively and beautifully; it has to be a language of science and technology and a language of high culture.

Ching (1995) reports the Malaysian Prime Minister, Dr Mahathir Mohamad's view of English. He told Malaysia that the choice is between learning English - to become a respected and developed country - and sticking with Malay and being left behind by its neighbours and competitors. In terms of trade, Mahathir says:

If Malaysians aren't proficient in English then our trading will be confined to domestic transactions. If we believe that besides preserving the nation we should develop the country then a suitable approach has to be worked out.

Malaysia faced the shortage of Bahasa Malaysia teachers when English ceased to be used as the medium of instruction. There were not enough fluent Bahasa Malaysia speakers who could teach mathematics and science. In former English schools, some teachers still do teach in English, even though the national exams are to be held in Bahasa Malaysia. Most courses were taught in Malay by Chinese university lecturers, and sometimes in very bad Malay. When Bahasa Malaysia was proclaimed as the medium of instruction, the standard of English declined. This led to the need to teach good English especially to the university students. There is a shortage of good qualified teachers and tutors in universities and schools. Most of the English teachers during the British era have retired. Malaysia is now experiencing a shortage of trained English language teachers, and model users of English. Ching (1995) blames the law that does not allow for recruitment of foreign teaching staff who are efficient in English but not in the national language.

When Bahasa Malaysia gained prominence, Malaysia experienced a serious shortage of Malay materials especially in the area of science and technology. There was also lack of Malay words for many technological terms. Gill (2003) strongly asserts that the scientific and technological terms were non-existent in the Malay language. Although the materials problem is partly solved at the primary and secondary school levels, and at university levels, Malaysian students still have to use textbooks written in English. Asmah (1987:165) attributes two causes:

One reason for this is the lack of books in Malay for the various disciplines at the tertiary level. Another reason is the general attitude, now becoming policy, which requires Malaysians reaching the level of tertiary education to have acquired a second language. To the Malaysians, English is the logical choice for the obvious reason that this is the only language of wider diffusion that they had been most familiar with for the last two hundreds years or so. Hence the teaching of English is not only compulsory at the school but also at the University.

Malaysia has plenty of academic reference materials in English; what it lacks are the English textbooks (for communication purposes) that have local flavor. The Malay Mail (1989: 16) is quoted:

Our scholars have not produced very much on Malaysian subjects in English. The lack of financial and promotional incentives, low royalties, inadequate provision for subsidies and secretarial assistance have all contributed to the unwillingness of academicians to become the vanguards of this national effort.

There is a tendency for more funds being allocated for Bahasa Malaysia than English. Malaysia has a centralized system of education. If the government supports a certain

bilingual program, then there is not much problem in obtaining funds. What is apparent are the differences in opinions among the politicians as to how much to spend on the teaching and learning of English.

4) General solutions to the problems present in Malaysia

People's perception towards the importance of a certain language is very hard to change. Society will show a positive attitude toward a particular language if that language has economic value and is perceived as being prestigious. The media seems to play a role in changing the people's attitude toward bilingualism. Teacher preparation for the teaching of Bahasa Malaysia and English is more rigorous. There are many Bahasa Malaysia (BM) and English as a Second Language (ESL) programs developed for the teaching of the two languages. For the production of materials in Bahasa Malaysia and the creation of scientific terminology, Dewan Bahasa and Pustaka (Language and Literary Agency) were created to deal with this.

Linguistic Situation in the United States of America

The United States of America has 50 states and this makes it one of the powerful nations in the world. It has a population (resident and non-resident) of approximately 300 million; comprising of 74% Whites, 11% African-Americans, 8.3% Hispanics, 0.72% Native Americans, 2.7% Asians, and 3.7% Others. United States has historically been a nation of immigrants, so that it is not surprising that languages other than that of the early English settlers should have affected both individuals and institutions. A significant feature of United States' educational structure can be presented in terms of the following; a student may opt for one of the paths: (1) six years elementary and six years of combined junior-senior high school, (2) six years elementary, three years junior high school, three years senior high, (3) four years elementary, four years middle schools, four years high school, or (4) eight years elementary and four years high school. These are more semantic differences than anything else; it all comes out to 12 years of pre-university schooling.

1) Linguistic history and profile of the United States?

The United States is a nation made of immigrants consisting of Whites, African-American, Hispanics, Asian Chinese, Vietnamese, Cambodians, Japanese, and some other ethnic groups. Most of the population speaks English, while the minority speaks their own languages, such as Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, and Laotians. The early immigrants assimilated into the mainstream in the use of English, but the recent immigrants "demand" the use of their own native languages. In the last decade of the 20th century, public school enrollments have continued to increase. Throughout the last decade of the 20th century, public school enrollments will continue to be transformed by an increase in the number of students who bring the richness of linguistic and cultural diversity with them to the public schools. For example, from 1991-92 to 1992-93, schools experienced a 13% increase in their enrollment of limited English proficient (LEP) students. By 1992-93 schools enrolled 2.7 million LEP students. In "US schools today, over 150 different languages are spoken by students who are eagerly trying to learn

English to enjoy the opportunities our public schools and society have to offer” (U.S. Department of Education, 1994).

2) Rationale and types of bilingual education in the United States?

Bilingual education was developed because many of the language minority students, particularly the Hispanics, were not doing academically well in schools. They constitute the highest number of school dropouts. Their low educational attainment became an issue, and the main reason is that they were not able to function well in English. Their inability to cope with English make it necessary that they be given instruction in their mother tongue until such time as they are ready to function in English and then be put in the mainstream classrooms.

The Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Language Affairs (OBEMLA), U.S. Department of Education (1994:3) states:

Bilingual education is a means to make it possible for linguistically diverse children to achieve the same challenging academic standards required of all children enrolled in America's schools. It is a vehicle to ensure equal access to education and to promote educational excellence for limited English proficient learners. A well-designed instructional program, using a students' native language (to varying degrees), designed and implemented at the local level, can be effective in promoting English proficiency and subject area competence. Bilingual education programs aim to: (i) help limited English proficient students master English; and (ii) help limited English proficient students master challenging content in all areas of the curriculum.

The Bilingual Education Act of 1974 made it clear that bilingual education was to be transitional in nature, and defined the program as follows:

The term 'program of bilingual education' means a program of instruction, designed for children of limited English-speaking ability in elementary or secondary schools, in which, with respect to the years of study to which such program is applicable: (i) there is instruction given in, and study of, English and, to the extent necessary to allow a child to progress effectively through the educational system, the native language of the children of limited English-speaking ability, and such instruction is given with appreciation of the cultural heritage of such children, and with respect to elementary school instruction, such instruction shall, to the extent necessary, be in all courses or subjects of study which will allow a child to progress effectively through the educational system.... (Bilingual Education Act, 1974:7).

The three main types of bilingual education in the United States are:

i) Transitional bilingual education (TBE) is a program in which language minority students are temporarily allowed to use their home language, until they are thought to be

proficient enough in the majority language to cope in the mainstream education. There are two major types of transitional bilingual education: (i) early exit TBE refers to two years maximum help using the mother tongue, (ii) late exit TBE often allows around 40% of classroom teaching in the mother tongue until the sixth grade (Garcia & Baker, 1995).

ii) Two-way bilingual education is a program that places language minority students from the same language background with language majority students in the same class. English and the native language of the minority students are used as the medium of instruction. This program takes on a balance model in which, the number of language minority and language majority students in a class is equal, and the amount of instruction in the two languages is also equal. The objective is to develop both languages so that this can enhance students' self esteem and cross-cultural understanding. Two-way bilingual class may be taught by a single teacher who is bilingual or by two teachers, one of whom should be proficient in the two languages.

iii) Maintenance bilingual education, which is few in number, refers to the education of language minority children through their minority language in a majority language society (Baker, 1993). For instance in the US schools, the majority language, that is, English will also be present in the curriculum, ranging from second language lessons to a varying proportion of the curriculum being taught in the majority language.

3) What are the problems encountered in the provision and implementation of bilingual education in the United States in terms of: i) linguistic perception ii) availability of teachers iii) availability of materials and iv) availability of funds?

This can be discussed by considering the view of the proponents and opponents of bilingual education. The proponents believe that bilingual education could aid students in their academic progress. Their native language would help them acquire knowledge in another language. The opponents are skeptical toward bilingual education because some research results show that it is not working - students do not improve. Besides, they prefer assimilation and believe that maintaining one's own language would only encourage divisiveness.

The United States faces an acute shortage of bilingual teachers who are bilingual in English and the students' language. This is because there are too many languages involved, not just one or two languages as found in Malaysia. It also faces a shortage of teachers who are majoring in bilingual-bicultural education. Teachers are not equipped with the skills to teach language minority students. Schnaiberg (1996) reports that the New York City schools suffer from a shortage of qualified bilingual teachers - 2,021 out of 4,339 aren't fully certified.

Materials in students' native language are hard to find. This is especially so if students' native language has no written form, or not enriched and developed by the students' community. Besides, in some languages, there are not many writers. If the students come from a war torn areas like Vietnam and Cambodia, this problem is intensified. BW Associates of Berkeley (1991:20) reports that:

California state experiences scarcity of materials in languages other than English is most pronounced for LEP students in grades 9-12, but K-8 students who speak languages other than Spanish are also disadvantaged. More than any other factor, insufficient materials limit access to core subjects like math, science and social studies.

Since there is a portion of the society who does not favor bilingual education, to obtain enough funds has been the main problem for bilingual educators. There is a mixed response towards bilingual education and many would rather have the State to get the fund from the federal government rather than to use the State's fund to improve the program. Besides the allocation of funds is more towards the transitional bilingual program rather than the two-way bilingual program. Thus, this leads to subtractive bilingualism rather than additive bilingualism. BW Associates of Berkeley (1991:12) reports the California state funding for programs and services for LEP students:

Existing funding levels are not only insufficient but unstable funds for supplemental services for LEP students come from many funding streams. District general funds account for 22% of supplemental LEP student services, 13% comes from state LEP funds and the rest comes from other categorical funds. The research team believes that district budgets are already overstressed and that an increase in state categorical funding would relieve some of the burden on districts and make funding more reliable. In addition, the LEP funding formula should be reviewed to eliminate present disincentives to reclassification of students (funding levels are based on the number of LEP students in the district the previous year).

4) What are the general solutions to these problems present in the United States?

One of the greatest steps taken was the establishment of Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Language Affairs (OBEMLA) in 1974 by the U.S. Department of Education. Its major role is to help school districts meet their responsibility to provide equal educational opportunity to the LEP students.

Proponents are trying their best to prove to society, by presenting research evidence, that bilingual education is effective in improving the academic performance of LEP students. They also try to convince the opponents that the status of English would not be threatened if the status of minority languages are upgraded, because English has always been the language for disseminating technological knowledge.

One of the titles of "Improving America's School Act of 1994" is "Title VII – Bilingual Education, Language Enhancement and Language Acquisition Programs." This title makes funding available for training more bilingual teachers, such as providing fellowship grants; the purpose is to increase the number of teachers who are certified in the area of bilingual education. Universities are expanding bilingual programs to solve the immediate teacher shortage. Schools employ paraprofessionals to meet the immediate

needs.

Spanish materials become more and more easily accessible, especially from Addison-Wesley. It is the other language groups that pose the greatest problems. The Asian language groups form their own organization and sort out ways to obtain materials. Besides, the Multifunctional Resource Centre (MRC) provides great assistance.

A Comparison Perspective

Until now, this paper has already discussed major implementation challenges of bilingual education in Malaysia and the United States in terms linguistic situation, rationale and features of bilingual education, main problems faced and solutions offered. This study will draw up a comparison between these aspects in the societies under examination.

i) Linguistic Situation

The study reveals that there is a similarity in one aspect between the two countries, that is, English has a strong influence on society and it is a tool and means of getting knowledge, information and resources. It is interesting to note that not only Malaysia was a British colony, but the United States too. English holds a higher position in the United States than in Malaysia. English is the language of the majority in the United States and there are many more minority languages in the United States than there are in Malaysia. This makes the linguistic conflict more intense since the linguistic situation is more complex.

ii) Bilingual Education Programs

The study shows that the bilingual education in Malaysia is more geared towards the maintenance of the mother tongues as compared to the ones in the United States. In Malaysia, there exist schools which use the students' native languages as the mediums of instruction especially those at the elementary level; even though Chinese and India secondary schools are not easily available, a Chinese or a Tamil student can learn his/her mother tongue as a subject at the secondary level. To be bilingual in Malaysia is more towards being able to function in Bahasa Malaysia and English. The United States' bilingual program is more transitional in nature; although there are some schools that have maintenance programs. The two-way bilingual programs seem more promising as they lead more towards additive bilingualism rather than subtractive bilingualism.

iii) Implementation Problems of Bilingual Education

(a) Linguistic Perception

In Malaysia the languages in competition are Bahasa Malaysia and English; and in the United States it seems English and Spanish are in competition. In Malaysia, there is a dilemma towards love of one's mother tongue among the majority Malays. English is a language in which the status was once lowered due to the nationalistic feelings of the

Malays. In the United States, the English-only group feels that other languages are a threat. In these two countries, it can be seen that English has a powerful influence on the society, although it is not the native language of the majority population, as in the case of Malaysia.

(b) Availability of Teachers

These two countries experience shortages of teachers to teach in the languages concerned. Malaysia faces both a shortage of Bahasa Malaysia and English teachers; whereas the United States faces shortages of minority language teachers, as the languages of the minority are just too many. The classroom teacher is responsible for delivering.

(c) Availability of Materials

Malaysia and the United States both face shortages of materials. Malaysia lacks materials in Bahasa Malaysia, though there is also a shortage of local English materials. The United States faces an acute shortage of materials other than English; some materials of the language minority are just too expensive and there are few writers in those languages.

(d) Availability of Funds

When Malaysia decided that Bahasa Malaysia was to be the medium of instruction, there was more allocation for the promotion of that language than any other languages. In the United States, state funding for bilingual education is not easy to obtain. Bilingual programs usually get funding from the federal government. Thus, there is similarity between the two countries, in that, more allocation is forwarded to the language of instruction that is used in mostly public schools.

Solutions to Problems

Both the two countries embarked on about the same solutions to the problems. Where linguistic perception is concerned, this is done largely through the media. Availability of resources is made easily accessible by the two countries, so that there is an increase in the number and amount. Both accept the constructive criticisms on the existing bilingual education. There is some kind of an evaluation on their programs so that there is improvement; this could in turn lead to the establishment of the best bilingual education.

Summary and Conclusions

Both Malaysia and the United States cater to the needs of the population, both for the majority or minority groups, because a certain form of bilingual education is provided for. The difference lies in the degree of attention. The two-way bilingual model adopted by the United States appears more promising for both countries with several necessary modifications if it is going to be applied in Malaysia. This is because Malaysia does not have native speakers of English.

Both countries face similar implementation challenges; but they are different in terms of languages involved. More effort is needed to deal with language problems in the United States because of the high degree of linguistic diversity compared to Malaysia. Bilingual education has multiple forms in the United States because the country is a very multi-ethnic country. One of the many other bilingual education in the U.S. focuses on learners of English as a second language.

Society should adopt a more positive attitude towards bilingualism as this is an asset. Perhaps, it can be done by holding a system-wide public relation campaign. Bilingualism will open wider horizons into other cultures and values as it is one of the ways to maintain cultural heritage.

Policy makers of the two countries seem to implement bilingual education in a haste, without considering the problems ahead, such as limited resources like shortage of teachers, materials and funds. The bilingual program should be a priority with full guidance and support from the authorities, like providing salary incentives for recruitment or training of bilingual teachers. Students in bilingual program with limited resources, limited curriculum materials and limited support will not receive quality education in an unequal situation.

More collaboration is needed among teachers, administrators, policy makers, society and the government, so that more effort is taken to eradicate or reduce the implementation problems. If bilingual programs are well designed and well received by the people at all levels, then students have a better chance of success.

What is advocated should be carried out. There should not be one-sided preference for one language at the expense of the other. The bilingual aspect of the dual language program should provide equitable education to both languages. Students should gain the same amount of content instruction, practice and reinforcement that the native speakers receive. Amrein and Pena (2000) state that without a systematic review of their practice, dual language programs could be subjecting students to inequality, to fewer educational opportunities, and to policies and practices that separate students according to race, ethnicity, and language orientation.

An attitude that one language is more superior to another should not be adopted. According to famous linguist Noam Chomsky, "There is no such thing as inferior languages. No language is more superior or inferior than the other". A study conducted by Amrein and Pena (2000) in the U.S. shows that English is seen as a more valuable language with a higher status and therefore students do not consider learning the native language. The native speaking students feel left out of the social environment until they learn English. This attitude will only hinder one's personal and social development as Chomsky says that all languages are equal in status, complexity and mastery as no one should feel superior or inferior with their inherited, nurtured language.

Under the circumstances when two-way bilingual program is not feasible, then limited LEP students should be given the opportunity to study their own mother tongue

throughout their education in schools. This is toward the aim of maintaining one's language; since cultural values can only be passed through one's native language. Students can be given access to education in their 'first' language. This is called the 'immersion program' where the teachers instruct predominantly in English, and use the students' native language for explanation only.

What should be of concern is the provision of the best education for each child. The aim is that students obtain the best academic attainment and be productive to society and not grow up being a nuisance to the community. If they are not successful the whole country will suffer, as more funds will then have to be channeled to those who have gone astray. Thus, more investment is needed in the area of bilingual education.

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