

Brief for San Francisco Lawyers' Committee for Urban Affairs as Amicus Curiae in Support of Petitioners (July 30, 1973).  
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Transcript of Oral Argument (December 10, 1973).

## SPANISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION POLICY IN THE U.S.: PARADOXES, PITFALLS, AND PROMISES

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The provision of appropriate education for Spanish-speaking and Spanish-learning students is among the greatest language policy challenges facing the United States today. This paper overviews current obstacles and opportunities concerning Spanish language education in the U.S., meaning K-12 academic and language instruction for speakers of Spanish as well as Spanish as a foreign/second language instruction for English speakers. It also updates previous discussions with a synthesis of recent demographic trends and policy initiatives. The first section of the paper overviews policy paradoxes in Spanish language education in the U.S., noting two opposing trends: as native language and bilingual education services for Spanish-speaking students have declined, the number of programs designed to promote early Spanish language learning among English speakers has increased. The next section of the paper argues that despite some specific setbacks of the last decade, language policy in the U.S. is poised for a paradigm shift in which linguistic diversity, and bilingualism in particular, is potentially valued as a national resource. This guarded optimism stems from developments in three areas: an explosion of federal-level language policy initiatives designed to promote second language learning, the growth of heritage language education as a field of study and practice, and increasingly positive public attitudes towards bilingualism. Each of these trends is outlined here. The paper concludes by considering how to best meet the challenge of maintaining this relatively new, popular enthusiasm for bilingualism and language learning while simultaneously ensuring that all language groups and all types of speakers benefit.

### Introduction

The provision of appropriate education for Spanish-speaking and Spanish-learning students is among the greatest language policy challenges facing the United States today. The formulation and implementation of a coherent language and

education policy for this group is critically important as Spanish is the most widely spoken language within the U.S. after English (U.S. Census Bureau 2000). There are more than 35 million Latinos in the U.S. and about 71% of this group (25 million) reportedly speaks Spanish at home (U.S. Census Bureau 2006). How we collectively manage this resource has major implications for the linguistic diversity of the U.S. By the same token, speakers of Spanish also are by far the largest minority language population in U.S. schools, comprising 77% of all English languages learners (ELLs) (Zehler *et al.* 2003). This group faces many well documented educational challenges (see Valenzuela 1999, Potowski & Carreira 2004). The academic success of speakers of Spanish and Spanish learners is of critical importance, both for these individuals as well as for the nation as a whole; the maintenance and cultivation of language skills are important steps in achieving this academic success (Dolson 1985, MacGregor-Mendoza 2000).

This paper offers an overview of current obstacles and opportunities concerning K-12 Spanish language education in the U.S. The chapter aims to synthesize current demographic trends and recent policy initiatives and argues that despite the setbacks of the last decade, language policy in the U.S. is poised for a paradigm shift in which linguistic diversity, and bilingualism in particular, are valued as a national resource. The first section of the paper reviews policy paradoxes in Spanish language education in the U.S. The remaining sections highlight recent developments, potential opportunities and challenges ahead for policy makers, education professionals, and teachers. The overall goal of this paper is to integrate and summarize current and critical issues related to Spanish language education in the U.S., here meaning academic and language instruction for speakers of Spanish as well as Spanish as a foreign/second language instruction for English speakers, and to update previous discussions (e.g., Huebner & Davis 1999) in light of current events, recent data, and new and proposed policies.

#### Policy paradoxes in Spanish language education in the U.S.

As has been well documented (e.g., Wiley & Wright 2004), the last ten years of K-12 Spanish language education policy and practice in the U.S. have been dominated by two major trends. On the one hand, we have witnessed the decline of native language and bilingual education services for Spanish-speaking students as the result of state policy measures such as Proposition 227 in California and Proposition 203 in Arizona. The data illustrating this decline in Spanish language educational services for speakers of Spanish are clear. For instance, between 1992 and 2002, the number of ELLs in grades K-12 grew by 72% nationwide, yet the percentage enrolled in bilingual programs declined from 37 to 17 (Zehler *et*

*al.* 2003). Even more powerful than these state measures—and impacting a greater number of students—Spanish language education for speakers of Spanish has been undermined by the testing and accountability requirements of “No Child Left Behind” (NCLB) passed in December of 2001 (Wright 2005a).<sup>1</sup> As Crawford (and others) have noted, “high-stakes testing in English has become a more insidious and, arguably, more substantial menace to bilingual education than the frontal assault of measures like Proposition 227” (2007: 3, see also Wright 2005b, 2007). NCLB requires annual tests in reading and math in grades 3 to 8, with one additional test in high school, and punishes any school that fails to demonstrate ‘annual yearly progress’ (AYP) towards the goal of making *all* students proficient by 2014.

While many aspects of NCLB have drawn critical attention (e.g., Rothstein 2007), perhaps the most vociferous objections have been from advocates for language minority students (e.g., Neill 2005, ILEP 2007) who argue that NCLB’s focus on accountability and testing in English has created a “top-down, prescriptive, arbitrary, inequitable, and punitive system that blames under-achievement on educators alone” (ILEP 2007: 1). The effects of NCLB on K-12 ELLs have been well documented (e.g., Menken 2008), and include a narrowed curriculum which stresses basic, low-level skills and extensive use of standardized tests which are not valid nor reliable measures of ELLs’ academic progress. These high-stakes tests are employed to attempt to measure progress towards NCLB goals of AYP for the ELLs as a subgroup of students. As formulated in NCLB, this goal is neither mathematically possible (given that once an ELL is deemed proficient s/he is moved out of this subgroup, thus lowering the group’s mean scores), nor empirically realistic (given that students on average require 5-7 years to acquire academic proficiency in their second language) (Gottlieb 2003, Crawford 2004). This unprecedented emphasis on test scores has reinforced the view of ELLs as problem students and undermined efforts to promote additive bilingualism (see Wright 2005b).

While the overwhelming focus on preparing ELLs to be tested in English has meant that Spanish language educational services for Spanish-speaking Latino students have sharply declined in recent years, during this same period, the number of programs designed to promote early Spanish language learning among speakers of English has increased dramatically. This is most evident in the growth of one-way immersion (for native English-speaking students) and of two-way immersion (for native English-speaking students and for speakers of a non-Eng-

<sup>1</sup> Technically, the law expired on September 30, 2007, but was renewed automatically for one year.

lish language) across the country (Center for Applied Linguistics 2007, Lenker & Rhodes 2007). Spanish is the most commonly offered language in one-way immersion programs: 43% of programs operate in Spanish (Lenker & Rhodes 2007). Likewise, the vast majority of two-way immersion programs, approximately 316 out of 338 (more than 93%), function in Spanish and English with the goal of producing Spanish-English bilinguals and biliterates. Two-way immersion programs have doubled in number in the last decade alone (Center for Applied Linguistics 2007). While these are increasingly popular, with demand out-stripping supply in many cases (Montague 1997), it is estimated that fewer than 2% of ELLs nationwide are enrolled in two-way bilingual programs (Crawford 2007).

In short, while Spanish-speaking students have fewer possibilities to be schooled in their native language and to expand their competence in their native tongue, English monolingual students have growing opportunities to learn Spanish in formal educational domains. Put another way, speakers of Spanish in the U.S. face an intensified version of the long-noted contradiction wherein bilingualism is treated as good for some (i.e., in this context, for native English speakers), but not for others (i.e., native speakers of Spanish) (Lambert & Tucker 1972, Grosjean 1982). This paradox is particularly salient in recent years given the massive shifts in migration, markets, and media that have brought native speakers of English and native speakers of Spanish in the U.S. into greater 'real' and greater 'imagined' contact.

Intensified real contact, of course, is largely the result of increased rates of immigration of speakers of Spanish to the U.S. One measure of this growth: the percentage of the foreign-born population in the U.S. who came from Latin America roughly doubled every decade from 1960 to 2000 (Migration Policy Institute 2007). Greater contact is also the result of changing patterns of settlement. Spanish-speaking communities are now well established, not only in their traditional strongholds—the southwest of the U.S. and in large urban centers—but in middle, suburban and rural America (Passel & Zimmermann 2001, Fessenden 2007). Further, speakers of Spanish and other languages have moved into many white-collar professions. For instance, while the great majority of foreign-born men age 16 and older work in construction (16%), manufacturing (14%) or service (19%) occupations, millions also work in white-collar positions such as business (7%), sales (7%) or science (9%), and thus are in greater everyday contact with English-monolingual, middle-class Americans (American Community Survey 2005).

Greater imagined contact is apparent in the growing popular perception that English monolingualism is no longer ideal, nor sufficient. This is evident in the lan-

guage-related recommendations by bodies such as the Committee for Economic Development (2006) which highlight, for instance, the need for increased professional development for language teachers, for greater employment of the resources of heritage-language communities, and for stronger incentives for foreign language study within professional schools, including those of business, engineering and medicine (Committee for Economic Development 2006). Similar concerns and sentiments are expressed by individuals in national surveys. For instance, nearly two-thirds of Americans recently reported that they wished they had taken more foreign language study (Scripps Survey Research Center 2007). Likewise, a Roper poll in 2005 found that young adults (aged 18-24) expressed the strongest support (75%) for greater funding for language education programs and instruction (Oleksak 2007). There is also recognition among at least some U.S. parents that their children will be part of an international work sphere in which multilingual skills will be advantageous if not required (King & Fogle 2006).

The backdrop to this paradox—and to all discussions of Spanish language education in the U.S.—is the steady drumbeat of those denouncing the 'immigration problem' and demanding the 'Americanization' or expulsion of speakers of Spanish (Larsen 2007). This movement has (further) chilled the already hostile climate towards bilingual education and Spanish language education for U.S. Latinos, increasing pressures for linguistic assimilation and English-only education. Appadurai, a leading scholar of the anthropology of globalization, has argued that these sorts of cultural pressures towards assimilation can be linked to the economic forces of globalization (Appadurai, personal communication, March 14, 2007).<sup>2</sup> For Appadurai, globalization means that few nations—even traditionally economically powerful and wealthy ones like the U.S.—are now economically independent or self-sustaining; for instance, China owed 400 billion dollars of U.S. debt in August 2007 (U.S. Treasury 2007). As a result of this economic dependency, cultural homogeneity becomes increasingly important and valued.

Quantitative estimates of language shift patterns put these acculturation pressures in sharp relief. As an example, demographic data from Southern California's large Latino population suggest that Mexican immigrants arriving to Southern California today can expect only 1 in 20 of their grandchildren to speak fluent Spanish (Rumbaut *et al.* 2006). Put another way, the probability that grandchildren of today's Mexican immigrants will 'not' speak Spanish is 97%. Thus, if patterns hold constant, even in the nation's largest Spanish-speaking enclave, Spanish skills will have all but disappeared by the third generation of U.S. resi-

<sup>2</sup> Professor Arjun Appadurai delivered a lecture at Georgetown University entitled "Research as a human right" on March 14, 2007.

dence. A wide range of empirical studies similarly points to a rapid shift from Spanish to English in many parts of the country (see Potowski 2004). Such a shift is hardly surprising given the overwhelming pressure many speakers of Spanish feel to use English. A growing number of U.S. Latinos believe that discrimination is a major impediment to success in the U.S. (54% in 2007, compared with 44% in 2004), and language was the most frequently cited (46%) cause of discrimination against them (named over 'immigration status' [22%], 'income/education' [16%], and 'skin color' [11%]) (Pew Hispanic Center 2007, see also MacGregor-Mendoza 1998).

Despite these tensions and contradictions, there is reason for guarded optimism concerning Spanish language education in the U.S. This optimism stems from developments in three areas: (1) an explosion of federal-level language policy initiatives designed to promote second language learning, (2) the growth of heritage language education as a field of study and practice, and (3) increasingly positive public attitudes towards bilingualism. The following sections address the future promises and potential pitfalls in each of these areas.

#### Language policy initiatives

The last five years have witnessed unprecedented attention at the level of federal policy to second and foreign language learning. In 2007 alone, members of the 110<sup>th</sup> session of Congress proposed or considered more than a dozen language-learning-related pieces of legislation (see Appendix for a summary of key pieces of legislation; for more details and recent updates see also Library of Congress [2007], JNCL-NCLIS [2007a]).

Much of this legislation has aimed to expand foreign language skills among the U.S. population and to address the perceived shortage of well-trained bilinguals. For instance, recently proposed legislation seeks to develop an over-arching national language strategy (S.451; H.R.747), to encourage elementary and secondary students to study foreign languages (H.R. 678; S.761), to pay cash awards to employees who are able to use their bilingual skills effectively (S.372), and to remediate foreign language teacher shortages through loan forgiveness programs (H.R.1718) (see Appendix for details).

These proposed initiatives are in addition to the existing "Foreign Language Assistance Program" (FLAP), the largest federal source of funding for foreign language programs in U.S. schools. FLAP provides support at both the state and local levels through competitively awarded grants with the aim of establishing, improving, or expanding innovative foreign language programs for elementary

and secondary school students. In 2007, the Department of Education awarded 52 FLAP grants, involving 10 languages of instruction; notably, Spanish was the most widely represented with nearly half (24) of the awards supporting Spanish language instruction, as evident in Table 1 (JNCL-NCLIS 2007b). The total allocation for FLAP awards has grown steadily, with an annual appropriation increase of 4 million dollars in 2006, 2 million in 2007, and 2 million in 2008 (funded at 25.7 million in 2008).

TABLE 1  
Foreign Language Assistance Program (FLAP)-2007  
Recipient Language Distribution  
Total number of grantees: 52

Language	Grantees Instructing in Language
Arabic	3 <sup>a</sup>
Chinese	22
French	1
German	2
Hindi	1
Japanese	8
Korean	2
Russian	5
Spanish	24
Turkish	1
<b>Languages of Instruction Total:</b>	<b>69<sup>a</sup></b>

<sup>a</sup> Some programs offer instruction in more than one language. Source: <[http://www.language-policy.org/grants/FLAP/2007\\_FLAP\\_grantees.html](http://www.language-policy.org/grants/FLAP/2007_FLAP_grantees.html)>.

The bulk of this federal legislation is motivated by perceived national defense needs (Peyton *et al.* 2008), and much of the focus is on the development of the so-called 'critical languages'. While more than 200 languages have been listed as critical by the U.S. government (Edwards, personal communication, May 3, 2007), many agencies, including the Departments of State and Defense, have given top priority to a handful of languages including Arabic, Mandarin, Russ-

ian, Persian, Hindi, and Korean. The National Language Flagship Program (NLFP), as an example, which provides funding for selected U.S. citizens “who are highly motivated to work for the federal government in an area related to U.S. national security”, focuses on Arabic, Korean, Mandarin, Persian, and Russian (NSEP 2007). As others have noted (e.g., Sandrock & Wang 2005), this narrow prioritization of a handful of select languages may well be short-sighted given that the languages in need will no doubt change very quickly in step with world events; a better long-range goal would be the active cultivation of a wider and deeper pool of Americans with second language skills of all sorts.

Overall, the greater emphasis on language and education policy at the federal level is a double-edged sword for speakers and learners of Spanish. On the one hand, Spanish is typically not framed in these policies as a language critical to U.S. national competitiveness, defense, and security, and in contrast to languages like Arabic or Farsi, it has not been given priority for funding in recent years. And Spanish still suffers, at least in some circles, from the stigma of being perceived as the ‘easy’, default foreign language choice for those who need to fill a foreign language requirement (Leeman 2006). On the other hand, while Spanish language education is not prominent in most policy statements, it does benefit directly from federal funding initiatives such as FLAP, which have grown in prominence and budgetary allocation in recent years. For instance, although the June 14, 2007 press release from the Department of Education, entitled “\$8.7 Million in Grants Awarded for Critical Foreign Language Instruction: Arabic, Chinese, Russian, Hindi, Farsi Among Languages Targeted for Learning”, the 2007 FLAP awards, touted the fact that the program helped meet national security needs, looking more closely, one sees that roughly half of the awards (24 out of 52) funded Spanish language education. Similarly, at the university level, the years between 2002 and 2006 saw a growing interest in foreign language study with enrollments increasing 13% in this period (a rate of growth which outpaced general course enrollment growth at 6.2%); while ‘critical’ or ‘less commonly taught languages’ increased in popularity, the bulk of the total expansion was due to Spanish language enrollment, which represented 52.2% of all foreign language enrollments in the U.S. during this period (MLA 2007). Thus, there is a notable ‘spillover’ effect in terms of the focus on and funding for foreign languages in general that benefits Spanish language education in particular. This greater focus on language competencies has also resulted in a growing recognition that an essential key to solving the U.S.’s current so-called language crisis entails making better use of the language skills already within our boundaries (Müller 2002).

### Heritage language as a field of study and practice

The last five to ten years have not only seen increased emphasis on foreign language learning in general, but also a heightened awareness of the language learning needs of heritage language learners, the great majority of whom in the U.S. are of Spanish language background. The result is the development of a new academic area focusing on heritage language learners and, in a few places, the institutionalization at the university and secondary level of programs designed to meet their specific needs (e.g., Potowski 2002, 2003). There are now dozens of books and articles, as well as entire journals and conferences dedicated to analyzing the linguistic, educational, and social characteristics of heritage language learners; the challenges to meeting their particular pedagogical needs; and the teaching approaches which are most appropriate and successful for this group (see Valdés 1981, Krashen *et al.* 1998, AATSP 2000, Wiley & Valdés 2000, Peyton *et al.* 2001, Valdés 2001, Potowski & Carreira 2004, Hornberger 2005, Leeman 2005, Carreira 2007, Heritage Language Journal 2007, REACH 2008). This intensified focus on heritage language learners is also evident in myriad small-scale efforts, such as those by Valdés, Fishman, Chávez, and Pérez (2006) to document heritage Spanish programs in secondary schools and universities, as well as in much larger ones such as the formation of the National Heritage Language Research Center (NHLRC) at the University of California, Los Angeles. The NHLRC sponsors multiple projects, including those to develop online teaching manuals for heritage language instructors, to formulate a generic framework for curricular design for heritage language instruction, to create language-specific materials, to gather baseline data on heritage and refugee communities within the U.S., and to develop guidelines for a heritage language learner oral proficiency interview.

These are significant advances; however, much more needs to be done, for instance, in the areas of teacher training, curriculum development, and institutionalization. As an example of the work ahead, it is estimated that 68% of U.S. post-secondary institutions do not offer any heritage language courses (González Pino & Pino 2000). Given the testing and accountability constraints and varied levels of access to professional development opportunities of K-12 teachers, elementary and secondary institutions which offer heritage language instruction are no doubt the exception rather than the norm.

While calls for teacher training for heritage language learners date back more than 25 years (Valdés 1981), there are few programs or standards for training teachers to instruct Spanish to native speakers (Potowski 2003). And with a handful of exceptions (e.g., New Mexico State University, Hunter College in New

York City), teacher-training efforts generally remain *ad hoc* and workshop-based. This lack of systematic attention to heritage language issues can be linked to competing institutional pressures as well as the ideologies operating in many departments of foreign languages, where U.S. varieties of Spanish are devalued, where the 'best' Spanish is seen as that which is 'pure', formal and contact-free, and where monolingual native speakers of Latin American or European Spanish set the norm for correct use (Valdés *et al.* 2003). It can also be linked to the fact that the backgrounds, linguistic skills, and pedagogical needs of heritage language learners, or "L1/L2 users" as some have argued they should be called (Valdés 2005: 411), have traditionally fallen outside the domain of the research and practice of the fields of second language acquisition (SLA) and bilingualism. As the foundational assumptions and key terms in both the fields of SLA and bilingualism receive serious critical attention (e.g., Heller 2007), heritage language learners and learning will likely continue to be the subject of expanded research and development.

#### Attitudes towards bilingualism

A third and final reason for optimism is the greater recognition in many parts of the U.S. of the value of knowing two languages. Among speakers of English, Spanish by far is the most popular choice, accounting for more than half of all foreign language instruction provided to students in the U.S. (NCELA 2007), a trend which may have less to do with the status of Spanish than what Leeman (2006: 38) describes as the "commodification of language and the contemporary fixation on the marketability of particular types of knowledge and education". For reasons rooted in both practicality and familiarity, among those aiming to learn a second language in the U.S., Spanish is far and away the most popular choice.

Concomitantly, language-minority parents, at least in some areas, are increasingly vocal about desires for their children to maintain their first language, and more assertive about educational rights and opportunities to do so (Peyton *et al.* 2001). For instance, research with Washington, DC, parents suggests that bilingualism (and in particular, Spanish-English bilingualism) is a goal for many middle and working-class parents (King & Fogle 2006). Both Spanish-dominant and English-dominant parents often refer to bilingualism as a 'gift' that they wish to impart and as an important advantage for their children (see Piller 2001).

Yet, while parents have many reasons for raising their children bilingually, garnered from both the popular press and their own experiences, they have relative-

ly little information about the processes and challenges of raising bilingual children (King & Fogle 2006). This is in part due to the limited coverage of research on these processes in the popular press, while much of the research that does find its way into the popular press is superficial, exaggerated or inaccurate (King & Fogle 2006). It is also due to the basic fact that in many areas there are no clear-cut findings concerning, for instance, precisely how much of what types of exposure is needed to ensure children achieve something close to active, productive bilingualism. Parents could be better supported in terms of techniques and approaches with easier access to the existing and relevant research findings for parents (e.g., those which show that book reading is a more effective approach than video-viewing for very young second language users [Patterson 1998]); parents could also be better supported emotionally with more realistic expectations for child outcomes and more explicit recognition of the work involved in bilingual child-rearing (Okita 2002). Lastly, while researchers could do more to popularly disseminate findings that are directly relevant to bilingual parenting, these sorts of private language policy decisions are only one aspect of cultivating bilingualism. Public language and education policy, and programs to implement that policy, are also critical (Piller 2005).

These shifts in attitudes towards language learning, Spanish, and bilingualism are significant and suggest possible policy directions. For instance, Potowski (2004) found that among teens and young adults in Chicago, positive attitudes towards Spanish was a factor mitigating shift towards English. Further, there is evidence that parents' personal language attitudes and goals concerning bilingualism can directly impact Spanish language education policy. There are myriad examples across the country where parents have advocated successfully for language programs to promote bilingualism or, for instance, in the case of Colorado, have successfully resisted restrictive anti-bilingual state-wide referenda. The growth of foreign language immersion programs in the U.S. – the largest number of which operate in Spanish – is due at least in part to "strong parental pressure for quality language programs with goals of high levels of proficiency" (Lenker & Rhodes 2007: 2). According to press accounts, in some cases English monolingual parents have convinced their school districts to open Spanish immersion or two-way programs (King & Petit in progress). In Washington, DC, for instance, Spanish-speaking parents were the driving force behind the establishment of the Latin American Montessori Bilingual School (Encinas, personal communication, August 23, 2002). These sorts of 'bottom-up' language planning efforts in schools and communities provide evidence of increasingly positive attitudes towards both Spanish and bilingualism generally; they also provide the foundation for the road ahead.

### Looking ahead

These shifts in national-level policy, in institutional priorities and practices, and in public attitudes are interconnected. Taken together, they suggest that we might be beginning to move beyond the antagonistic, simplistic and futile debate between advocates of English-only and supporters of bilingual education.<sup>3</sup> One of the biggest overall challenges as we move ahead will be, on the one hand, to maintain this relatively new, popular enthusiasm for bilingualism and language learning, while, on the other, to ensure that all language groups and all types of speakers benefit. Meeting this challenge will require creativity, commitment, and carefully crafted language policies.

It will also require looking beyond our own borders and examining other countries' (more) successful language plans and policies for promoting bi- and multilingualism (Commission of the European Communities 2003, Beacco 2007). For instance, while the European Union does not have an official language policy, since 2003, the European Commission has had an 'Action Plan' for the promotion of language learning and linguistic diversity (Commission of the European Communities 2003). The plan outlines specific, agreed-upon steps for spreading the benefits of multilingualism to all European citizens through lifelong language learning starting at a very young age; for encouraging mobility and intercultural contact among language students and teachers; for providing for high quality language teaching through enhanced professional support; and for making public spaces more language friendly through bilingual and sub-titled signage. As a parallel step, 22 nations have ratified the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (Council of Europe 2005), which aims to support the historical, regional or minority languages of Europe with the twin goals of promoting Europe's cultural heritage and protecting the right to use one's language in both public and private domains.

With these EU aims as a contrastive backdrop, what could we hope for, and what might we advocate for, in terms of future Spanish language education policies in the U.S. at federal, state, and local levels? First, given the large number of speakers, massive course enrollments and unique historical status, Spanish would be recognized as a special cultural, educational, and communicative resource for both the individual and the nation as a whole (Ruiz 1984). Second, given the grassroots enthusiasm for early language learning and widespread concern over

<sup>3</sup> A small indication of such a trend: many representatives of both groups supported NCLB in its foundation and early years, but are now united, albeit for different reasons, in condemning it as a failure.

'language readiness' of the country, bilingualism for both English-dominant and Spanish-dominant students would be an explicit educational goal. And third, based on these two priorities, federal-level programs would be established to assist local and state agencies to: (1) design programs at the K-12 and university level to support heritage language education for speakers of Spanish; (2) increase the number of two-way programs for both native speakers of English and native speakers of Spanish; and (3) support institutionalized and permanent teacher-training programs for heritage language and two-way teachers, and provide incentives for state and local agencies to develop appropriate certification programs, curricula, and learning standards.

'Strong' maintenance or developmental bilingual education has all but disappeared in most parts of the U.S., leaving only 'weak' or short-term, transitional programs, or more often, English-only approaches, in its place. In light of current political and policy constraints, embracing and promoting two-way programs for native speakers of Spanish and for native speakers of English is the best option. In an increasing number of two-way programs, many or all participating students are Spanish-language background Latinos, some English dominant, and others Spanish dominant; thus these programs have the potential to meet the needs of heritage language learners as well. There are dangers inherent in making the provision of bilingual education or native language instruction for ELLs dependent upon the support and participation of *non*-ELLs. Yet two-way programs—in contrast to most other practiced forms of (transitional) bilingual education—aim to cultivate bilingualism and biliteracy, and thus put Spanish, as well as Spanish-speaking students, on stronger ground than any other option presently available. For sure, this is an ambitious agenda; however, funding, planning, and implementing such programs are facilitated by the fact that Spanish-speaking students tend to be concentrated. For instance, we know that the great majority (53.7%) of ELL students are enrolled in a small number of districts with very large ELL student populations—5,000 or more LEP students each (Zehler *et al.* 2003).

All of the advances listed above rest on the continued development of grassroots, bottom-up planning, and in particular, clearly delivered and well orchestrated demands by researchers, parents, teachers, and community activists for bilingual programming for *all* learners. For researchers, this means continuing to work to make research on bilingualism and language learning meaningful, accessible and relevant for the public (e.g., King & Mackey 2007). For parents, researchers and activists, this means engaging in positive, goal-oriented advocacy as aggressively as (and perhaps even borrowing tactics from) English-only, anti-bilingual, and anti-immigrant organizations such as English First (2007) and English for the Children (2007).

In advocating for such an agenda, it is helpful to note that such an approach not only benefits individual students (Howard *et al.* 2003), but would do much to help the U.S. keep pace on the international stage. For instance, England has recently revised its language education policy to require that *every child* learn a foreign language in primary school from the age of seven through fourteen (Andalo 2007). At present, the U.S. by comparison lags far behind. As Peyton *et al.* (2008: 178) summarize: "two trends in the U.S. education system inhibit development of language proficiency—the squandering of the language proficiencies of U.S. residents [...] and lack of foresight in strategically selecting languages to be taught in schools, developing and documenting excellent language programs that are appropriate for the students involved, and determining the levels of language proficiency to be reached". It has long been noted that one of the keys to solving the U.S. language crisis is the cultivation of 'homegrown' language skills. Taking seriously the educational needs of speakers of Spanish, as well as the growing importance for all students to learn and use Spanish, is a solid first step in the right direction.

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## Appendix

### EXAMPLES OF LEGISLATION OF THE 110TH CONGRESS CONCERNING FOREIGN LANGUAGES<sup>4</sup>

- 1) H.R.678. *National Security Language Act* (Introduced: 1/24/2007, Sponsor: Rep. Rush Holt [D-NJ]):

To strengthen the national security through the expansion and improvement of foreign language study. The bill would appropriate \$48,000,000 for FY 2008 to fund grants for this program. This legislation contains provisions that address numerous aspects of language education in the U.S. Section 2 discusses early foreign language instruction through partnership programs between local educational agencies and institutions of higher education. The bill would appropriate \$48,000,000 for FY 2008 to fund grants for this program. Section 4 of the legislation calls for a marketing campaign to encourage high school and college students to study a foreign language, with emphasis on less-commonly taught languages. The next section requires the establishment of an international flagship language initiative within the National Security Education Program. It would expand grant program authority by awarding grants to colleges and universities to carry out activities of the International Flagship Language Initiative. All of these grant programs are able to give preference to programs that teach the less commonly taught languages or 'critical foreign languages'. Also, the last section of the bill proposes to grant loan forgiveness to students who have obtained an undergraduate degree in a critical foreign language and who go on to teach a critical language in an elementary or secondary school.

- 2) S.372. *Intelligence Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2007* (Introduced: 1/24/2007, Sponsor: Sen. John Rockefeller [D-WV]):

To authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2007 for the intelligence and intelligence-related activities of the United State Government, the Intelligence Community Management Account, and the Central Intelligence Agency Retirement and Disability System, and for other purposes. Section 441 would authorize the Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation to pay a cash award to employees who use foreign language skills to protect against international terrorism or clandestine intelligence activities (or maintains foreign language skills for this purpose).

- 3) S.451 / H.R.747. *National Foreign Language Coordination Act of 2007* (Introduced: 1/31/2007, Sponsor: Sen. Daniel Akaka [D-HI]):

To establish a National Foreign Language Coordination Council that would be responsible for overseeing, coordinating, and implementing NSLI, developing a national for-

<sup>4</sup> Source: <<http://thomas.loc.gov/> and [www.languagepolicy.org](http://www.languagepolicy.org)>.

eign language strategy, conducting a survey of the status of the Federal agency foreign language and area expertise and needs for such expertise, and monitoring the implementation of this strategy. This bill would also create the position of National Language Director to be appointed by the President.

- 4) S.761. *America Creating Opportunities to Meaningfully Promote Excellence in Technology, Education, and Science Act* (Introduced: 3/5/2007, Sponsor: Rep. Harry Reid [D-NV]):

To invest in innovation and education to improve the competitiveness of the U.S. in the global economy. In addition to expanding programs and funding for math, science, engineering, and technology, the America COMPETES act would develop and implement programs for bachelor's and master's degrees in critical foreign languages with concurrent teaching credentials. It would also expand critical foreign language programs in elementary and secondary schools in order to increase the number of students studying and becoming proficient in these languages.

- 5) H.R. 1718. *To provide additional student loan forgiveness to teachers of foreign languages* (Introduced: 3/27/2007, Sponsor: Rep. Dennis Moore [D-KS] and Rep. Christopher Shays [R-CT]):

To provide teachers of foreign languages the same loan forgiveness opportunities as teachers of math and science. This would make teachers of foreign languages eligible for loan forgiveness up to \$17,500 if they teach in eligible Title I elementary and secondary schools for five years. This bill addresses the teacher shortages in foreign languages and is designed to expand the number of teachers entering the field.