

THE BILINGUAL RESEARCH JOURNAL  
Summer/Fall 1996, Vol. 20, Nos. 3 & 4, pp. 383-410

## PARENTAL ATTITUDES TOWARD BILINGUALISM IN A LOCAL TWO-WAY IMMERSION PROGRAM

Barbara A. Craig  
Tunghai University, Taichung, Taiwan

### **Abstract**

This study describes why both Anglo and Latino parents in one public school district in an American east coast major metropolitan area chose to enroll their children in a local Spanish-English two-way immersion program. It reports on a written attitude survey administered to the parents of the 194 students enrolled in the program during the 1991-92 school year. Using questionnaires in both Spanish and English, the survey investigated the relationship between parents' attitudes toward bilingualism and their reasons for enrolling their children in the two-way program. The results demonstrate that, as Fishman envisioned, groups of language-minority and Anglo children "can ultimately wind up in the same classroom, one motivated by transitional and maintenance considerations and the other by enrichment considerations" (1981, p. 525). The study suggests that two-way immersion holds promise as a viable model of bilingual education that promotes bilingualism in language-majority as well as in language-minority children, while supporting equal educational opportunity for both groups.

### **Background to the Study**

Two issues involving language intersect in contemporary American public education. First, delivering English-medium instruction in multilingual classrooms is a continuing challenge in America's highly diverse urban areas. At the same time, most majority group English-speaking children are not fluent in a language other than English. As Fishman (1981) points out, foreign language education has been neglected

in the public schools because Americans have not historically valued societal bilingualism. English-speaking Americans generally consider foreign languages as non-core "elective" school subjects for their own children, but often discourage non-English language maintenance and use among immigrant groups. Zelasko (1992) documents this "bilingual double standard" in American society. She claims that American attitudes toward bilingualism have run in cycles, historically showing "an inverse relationship between positive attitudes toward bilingualism for native English-speakers and positive attitudes toward bilingualism for non-native English-speakers (i.e., support vs. opposition or disinterest)" (p. iv).

Recently, leaders in industry, education, and government have cited Americans' general lack of competence in foreign languages as a national security issue and a major factor contributing to the U.S. loss of competitiveness in world economic markets (Edwards, 1987; Panetta, 1992; Ruiz, 1994; Tucker, 1991). As early as 1975, at the signing of the Helsinki Accords on international trade and security, the signatories - including the United States government - agreed to promote foreign language learning as an essential prerequisite of international peace and understanding (Conklin & Lourie, 1983, p. 231). On the local level, many English-speaking American parents want their children to develop the skills necessary to function in a society which is becoming increasingly diverse, both culturally and linguistically. Based on these national socioeconomic and demographic concerns that impact local communities, mainstream parents in the United States are again showing interest in having their children develop bilingual competence through public school foreign language instruction (Lambert & Taylor, 1988, 1990).

One index of this increasing interest in foreign language competence is the recent expansion in the number and geographic distribution of two-way immersion programs in public elementary schools across the United States (Christian & Mahrer, 1992, 1993; Christian & Montone, 1994; Christian & Whitcher, 1995; Lindholm, 1987). Two-way immersion is content-based instruction using both English and a second language to teach the regular subject matter curriculum to classes composed of balanced numbers of English-speaking and language-minority students (Lindholm 1990; Snow 1989). In 1987, Lindholm identified 30 such programs in eight states in the U.S. The newest program listed, started in 1986, was the site of the parent attitude survey reported on here.

By 1995, 182 two-way immersion programs had been documented in 18 states and the District of Columbia (Christian & Whitcher, 1995). Considering the historical public opposition to bilingual education in the U.S. (Crawford, 1989; Cummins, 1989; Fishman, 1984; Hakuta, 1986; Secada & Lightfoot, 1993; Ruiz, 1994), this is phenomenal growth in just eight years for a bilingual instructional model. A major factor in the popularity and success of these programs has been the support of the English-speaking parents who desire foreign language education for their children (Craig, 1993). The two-way model addresses the dual challenge to American schools noted above: it provides for the delivery of instruction in multilingual classrooms while providing both language-majority and language-minority students opportunities to develop bilingual competence in English and another language. Moreover, as Fishman (1981) suggests, two-way immersion supports the language-minority child's right to some education in the mother tongue, as well as the Anglo child's "corresponding right (a cultural right) to receive part of his education via another language in order to attain his maximal personal enrichment" (p. 525). This article is a case study of the relationship between mainstream parent attitudes toward bilingualism and their acceptance of and participation in a form of bilingual education: two-way immersion.

### **Purpose of the Study**

During the 1991-92 school year, an attitude survey was administered to the parents of 194 children in a public elementary school's Spanish-English two-way immersion program. The questionnaire used in the survey, administered in both Spanish and English versions, examined the relationship between the parents' attitudes toward bilingualism and their reasons for enrolling their children in the program. Because participation in the immersion program is voluntary, it was evident that the parents were a self-selected group who viewed bilingual ability favorably for their children. However, the survey attempted to find out why this fairly diverse group of parents valued bilingualism and whether any of their attitudes or reasons for enrolling their children differed according to the home language of the family. Thus the purpose of the study was to explore the relationship between the parents' expressed attitudes toward

b i l i n g u a l i s m

and their stated reasons for enrolling their children in a bilingual education program.

For example, non-English-speaking children enrolled in American public schools generally shift to speaking English almost exclusively within a few years of their arrival in the United States (Snow & Hakuta, 1988; Veltman, 1983, 1988). And according to Lambert and Taylor (1988, 1990) and Zelasko (1992), while English-speaking Americans might value bilingual proficiency for their own children, they are not as convinced of the importance of non-English home language maintenance for minority- language children. Thus one might expect that English-speaking parents would enroll their children in a two-way immersion program for enrichment foreign language instruction while Spanish-speakers would desire English-language instruction coupled with Spanish language maintenance. If the survey results confirmed these expectations, they would support the notion that two language groups with distinct language- learning goals could receive the benefits they desired from participating in the same bilingual education program. Because the American public has historically viewed bilingual education as a compensatory program for socially disadvantaged ethnolinguistic minority groups (Crawford, 1989, 1992; Fishman, 1979; Hakuta, 1986; Ruiz, 1994; Tucker, 1984), the survey findings could contribute to a positive redefinition of the term bilingual education in American society. Fishman (1966) terms this redefinition process "the utilitarianization of behavior" (p. 408), explaining that "Ethnicity and bilingualism need to be retooled so that their `image' will appear to be as much in line with the public good as is the image of other recognized self-interest groupings in American life" (Fishman, 1981, p. 523).

### **Linguistic Demographics of the Study Site and School Population**

The study site, Scott Elementary School, is located in Metro County (both are pseudonyms), a multilingual, multiethnic urban area of about 180,000 in a major east coast metropolitan area of the United States. According to 1993 figures, one out of five Metro County residents is foreign-born and one in four speaks a language other than English at home. The county's ethnic composition is about 6.5% Asian, 10% African-American, 14% Hispanic origin, and 69% European-American.

Between 1980 and 1990, the total population of the county rose by 12%, while its Hispanic origin population rose by over 160% - an increase of 14,000 persons. Fully 30% of these new residents were immigrants and refugees from El Salvador. The next largest group, 8%, was of Mexican origin, while the remaining 62% came from 13 other Central and South American countries.

As of September 1991, the Metro County Public Schools served a total student population of about 16,000 in grades K through 12. All children who are not native speakers of English are tested for English language proficiency when they enroll in one of Metro County's schools. If their English language competence is strong enough to enable them to attend regular English-medium classes at grade level, they are immediately mainstreamed (enrolled in regular classes with native English-speaking students).

If they are not proficient in English, or if their level of English is not advanced enough for them to receive regular English-medium instruction at grade level, they are designated "limited English proficient" (LEP) and placed in ESL/HILT (English as a second language/high intensity language training) classes. These classes vary from pull-out classes providing a few class periods of English-language support every day for mainstreamed students, to half- or full-day programs of English-language instruction in self-contained classrooms.

Fully 21% of the elementary school children in Metro County's schools are classified as LEP, and they speak one of 55 different non-English languages at home. At Scott Elementary School, the site of the present study, nearly 35% of the students, or over 200 children, are classified as LEP, and the great majority of these students are native speakers of Spanish. Those who are refugees from war-torn El Salvador have had schooling disrupted in their home country, experienced family separation, and often suffer from posttraumatic stress disorder. Not surprisingly, then, Scott Elementary has encountered challenges in delivering English-medium instruction to its socially, culturally, and linguistically diverse students. To help address the language education needs of both Spanish-speaking and language-majority students at Scott, the Metro County Public Schools decided to establish a pilot program in Spanish-English two-way immersion at the school.

### **Brief History of the Scott School Two-way Immersion Program**

The inception of the Scott School two-way program was a result of efforts on the part of ESL/HILT staff in Metro County who were exploring new models for educating language-minority students. The Metro County school system was interested in program models combining foreign language instruction for English-speaking students with improved methods of educating minority-language students in the content areas. Scott Elementary was chosen as the site for the two-way immersion program because of its high proportion of native Spanish-speaking students. Moreover, the principal at that time had a keen interest in establishing the program, other school staff members supported his efforts, and he was able to convince the parents of nine native Spanish-speaking families and eight native English-speaking families to enroll their children in the experimental program in the fall of 1986.

In order to begin the first two-way immersion class in 1986, the principal had in fact gone door-to-door in the Scott School neighborhood enlisting both Anglo and Latino parents to enroll their children in the program. To avoid the negative public attitudes associated with the term "bilingual education," Scott school staff initially positioned the program within the gifted and talented strand at Scott and publicized it as enrichment foreign language instruction, thus engaging the participation of English-speaking children while enhancing the prestige of language-minority children in the program.

When the two-way immersion concept was explained to them, the Spanish-speaking parents were delighted for their children to have the opportunity to receive instruction in Spanish at school. The English-speaking parents had reservations about their children receiving half-day instruction in Spanish; nonetheless, ten native-English-speaking children were enrolled in the program by their parents, eight initially and two more during the year. By the end of the first school year, the English-speaking parents' attitudes toward the program had changed considerably. In fact, some of the parents wanted to take Spanish classes themselves in order to be able to help their children with homework assignments in Spanish.

The next year (1987-88), 15 of the original students, plus three new to the program, continued as second-graders. In addition, a new two-way immersion first grade was added, composed of nine native Spanish

speakers and ten native English or English-proficient speakers. The program continued to grow by adding one class at the next grade level each year. By 1994-95, its eighth year, the program included 295 children in grades K through 5. (For a full discussion of the evaluation component of the program, including evaluation questions and procedures, student assessment instruments and results, classroom and national achievement test scores, and a summary of the outside evaluator's findings and recommendations, see Craig, 1993, pages 132-161.)

### **Development of the Parental Attitude Survey**

Since its inception in 1986, one of the strengths of the Scott School two-way immersion program has been its continuous use of an outside evaluator to monitor the program, evaluate student progress in both Spanish and English language proficiency and in academic content areas, and suggest improvements to the program. Evaluations of the Scott School program in earlier years had included brief telephone interviews with parents aimed at discovering their opinions of the program. These informal surveys revealed highly positive attitudes toward the program on the part of both the English-speaking and Spanish-speaking parents. However, with the addition of morning and afternoon immersion kindergarten classes in 1991, telephone interviews became a substantial undertaking for a program serving nearly 200 children.

As part of the 1991-92 evaluation, a written questionnaire was designed to survey the language attitudes of parents with children in the Scott School immersion program. Both Spanish and English versions of the instrument were developed and administered to all program parents, according to their home language. The purpose of the survey was to elicit the parents' attitudes toward bilingualism, as well as to measure their satisfaction with the immersion program. A written questionnaire format was chosen in order to reach all the parents in the program, to facilitate the collection of quantitative data, and to substantially decrease the time that would have been needed to conduct telephone interviews with nearly 200 families. In addition to greatly reducing the time needed for the survey, the other benefits of a written questionnaire over telephone interviews were substantial, including better control and comparability across responses, relative anonymity and confidentiality for the respondents designed to

encourage frank responses and comments, and decreased reliance on interviewer notetaking and memory during telephone interviews, coupled with an exact written record of respondents' reported attitudes and concerns.

The questionnaire included both closed and open items. For the closed items, respondents indicated their opinions or attitudes on a strongly continuous 5-point Likert scale. Following each question, a space marked "Comments" encouraged parents to expand or clarify the response they had circled on the attitude scale. There were two different types of questions included on the survey: ones specifically asking for parents' opinions of the Scott School immersion program itself and those designed to elicit attitudes toward bilingualism in general. These latter survey items focused on parental attitudes toward bilingualism in American society outside the Scott School program. (The questionnaire items on general attitudes toward bilingualism appear in the Appendix.)

This second category of survey items, those addressing parental attitudes toward bilingualism, relied heavily on the questions about the use of heritage languages in Lambert and Taylor's (1990) study of cultural and racial diversity in Hamtramck, Michigan. The evaluation team considered it appropriate to modify some of these questions for use with the Scott School immersion parents because of the similarities between the populations and goals of the two studies. Both were concerned with eliciting the language attitudes of parents of public school children, both dealt with diverse multilingual, multiracial populations, and both shared a concern for question wording and design that would be appropriate for a population including respondents from a range of socioeconomic backgrounds. Because the Scott School questionnaire also asked for parental evaluations of the immersion program (first category of items), the general language attitude questions were embedded within the context of an opinion poll about the two-way immersion program. The intent was that the immediate context of the school program would focus parents' attention on their children's specific experiences in the Scott School bilingual program rather than on answering generalized, context-free questions about their own (the parents') attitudes toward bilingualism. In this way, the outside evaluators expected that the typical bias attributed to self-report measures of language attitudes (e.g. Agheyisi & Fishman, 1970; Fasold, 1984; Shuy, 1981) might be mitigated somewhat, because

the attitudes parents expressed would have an experiential basis: their children's participation in the two-way immersion program.

In addition to the questionnaire, an introductory letter to the parents was prepared, explaining the purpose of the survey and soliciting their help. A second letter accompanied the questionnaire, which was sent home with the children the following week. The questionnaire and both letters were translated into Spanish by a bilingual member of the outside evaluator's staff, who took particular care to adjust the register and variety of Spanish so that the letter would be appropriate for readers from a variety of national and educational backgrounds. Surveys were sent to the families according to the home language (Spanish or English) noted in the school records for each child.

### **Administration of the Parent Attitude Survey**

The survey was administered in January 1992 rather than in the fall of 1991 in order to give children new to the program time to settle into their class routines. One week before the survey administration, all children in the two-way immersion classes took home the introductory letter in their parents' home language. The following week, the children took home the questionnaires and cover letters addressed to their parents. The cover letter asked parents to complete and return the questionnaire by mail the next week.

Within two weeks, 120 of the questionnaires distributed had been returned to the outside evaluator. Sixty of the returns were Spanish-language questionnaires; sixty were in English. A total of 194 questionnaires had been sent home with the children; however, because some families had more than one child in the program the actual number of families surveyed was 174. The 120 returns represented responses from 113 of these families, for an overall response rate of 65% of the families surveyed.

### **Parent Attitude Survey Results and Discussion**

Responses from the two language groups were compared on items concerning general attitudes toward bilingualism. Table 1 displays the results of independent t-tests for each item, using home language as the

classing variable. (Refer to the Appendix for the wording of each questionnaire item.)

Table 1  
*Mean attitude scores by home language group*

Questionnaire item # and topic	English (n=60)	Spanish (n=60)	t (df=118)	p
1. Cultural attitude	4.133	3.967	.667	.506
2. Maintain language	4.233	4.750	2.854	.005*
3. English fluency	4.817	4.833	.111	.912
4. Bilingual/pride	4.400	4.767	1.708	.090
5. Bilingual/accepted	4.067	4.567	2.060	.042
6. BI/understanding	4.433	4.667	1.208	.229
7. Bilingual/unfair	1.483	1.850	1.462	.146
8. Bilingual/jobs	4.667	4.767	.607	.545

\* significant at  $p < .01$

As shown in Table 1, the English- and Spanish-speaking parents expressed similar attitudes toward all aspects of bilingualism. There was, however, a significant difference in the mean scores of the two groups on the question of minority language maintenance (item 2;  $t = 2.854$ ,  $df = 118$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Although the confidence level chosen for the survey analysis was  $p < .01$ , the difference between the two group means was in fact significant at  $p < .005$ , leaving no doubt that the responses of the Spanish- and English-speaking parents represented two different populations.

While showing a statistically significant difference, then, it should be noted nonetheless that the mean attitude positions selected by the respondents from both language groups were above point 4.0 on the 5.0 scale (4.750 for the Spanish-speaking parents compared to 4.233 for the English-speaking parents). While it is reasonable that the Spanish-speaking parents would value minority language maintenance, the English-speaking parents' positive response on this question provides evidence that they value bilingualism for minority-language groups as well as for their own children. Thus the response pattern indicates substantial

agreement between both groups that minority language maintenance is important in the United States.

Parental responses did not show significant intergroup variation on the other questions. There was general agreement that participation in the two-way immersion program had increased their children's cross-cultural awareness and understanding (items 1 and 6); strong consensus that English fluency is essential for their children in American society (item 3); and considerable confidence that bilingual children are treated fairly and have increased employment opportunities in the United States (items 7 and 8).

Responses on two other items, while not statistically significant, deserve some comment. There was a difference approaching significance in the mean scores of the two groups regarding the acceptance of bilingual children in American society (item 5;  $p = .042$ ). The Spanish-speaking parents showed slightly more confidence that bilingual children would feel accepted, a conviction that was confirmed by the Spanish-speaking parents' written comments (see discussion below). The mean score for both groups, however, was between 4.0 and 4.6 on the 5-point scale, indicating definite agreement among all parents that bilingual children feel accepted in the United States.

There was also some difference in the opinions held by the two groups regarding the sense of pride their children would feel as bilinguals (item 4;  $p = .090$ ). The mean score for both groups was between points 4.4 and 4.8 on the scale, indicating that parents in both groups were quite positive that their children would take pride in speaking two languages. As on the question of the acceptance of bilingual children, however, the mean score of the Spanish-speaking parents demonstrated slightly more pride in being bilingual than did that of the English-speaking parents. This sense of self-respect as bilinguals in American society was reinforced in the written comments of the Spanish-speaking parents, discussed in the following section.

While the two groups thus showed some difference in their opinions of the acceptance and pride felt by bilingual children, there was virtually no difference in the parents' commitment to the importance of English fluency for their children (item 3;  $t = .111$ ,  $df = 118$ , n.s.). Respondents from both groups marked responses close to the "Very important" point (5.0) on the scale, indicating strong agreement on the importance of

English fluency in American society. These results corroborate those obtained from previous polls of ethnolinguistically diverse Americans regarding their attitudes toward the importance of English in the United States (Craig, 1993; Lambert & Taylor, 1988, 1990).

Likewise, there was no significant difference between how the two groups of parents perceived their children's attitudes toward children from other cultures ( $t = .667$ ,  $df = 118$ , n.s.). The mean attitude position chosen by respondents from each group was about 4.0 on the 5-point scale, indicating that parents in both groups generally felt participation in the two-way immersion program had increased their children's understanding of children from other cultures (item 1). Similarly, there was agreement between the two groups of parents regarding the cross-cultural understanding of bilingual children in the United States (item 6). The mean scores of both groups fell about midway between points 4.0 and 5.0 on the scale ( $t = 1.208$ ,  $df = 118$ , n.s.), indicating definite agreement among the parents that bilingual children are more cross-culturally sensitive. The results obtained on this item support those found for item 1 and represent one of the main reasons English-speaking parents expressed for enrolling their children in the Scott School program (see discussion below).

The two groups of parents also expressed similar opinions regarding the treatment of bilingual children in the United States (item 7). Mean scores for both groups were between points 1.0 and 2.0 on the scale, indicating considerable confidence that bilingual children are not treated unfairly in the United States ( $t = 1.462$ ,  $df = 118$ , n.s.). On a related question (item 8), both language groups expressed substantial confidence that being bilingual would make their children more prepared to find a job in the future than their monolingual counterparts in the United States. The group mean scores showed no significant difference in parental opinions regarding the preparedness of bilingual children to find jobs in the future ( $t = .607$ ,  $df = 118$ , n.s.).

Thus the English- and Spanish-speaking parents expressed remarkably similar attitudes toward all aspects of bilingualism except the importance of non-English home language maintenance. They agreed on the positive effect of bilingual competence on their children's cross-cultural attitudes and understanding, fair treatment in American society, and enhanced future job prospects, as well as on the importance of English

language proficiency in the United States. These attitudes are corroborated by the parents' written comments in both Spanish and English, discussed in the following section.

### **Parents' Reasons for Enrolling Their Children in Immersion**

In addition to the quantitative results just summarized, a qualitative analysis was made possible by the inclusion of the "Comments" section following each question. Besides answering an open-ended question asking why they had enrolled their children in the immersion program, fully 68% of the English-speaking parents and 70% of the Spanish-speaking parents wrote comments in their native language about one or more of the closed-format items.

Recall that the purpose of the statistical analysis was to compare the responses of the two language groups. The initial hypothesis was that both groups of parents would hold similarly positive attitudes toward bilingualism but would differ in their reasons for enrolling their children in the two-way immersion program. The results of the quantitative analysis of the survey responses confirmed this view: the parents agreed on the value of bilingualism, differing only in the relative importance they attached to non-English home language maintenance. As can be seen from their written comments presented below, however, parents from the two language groups differed markedly in their reasons for enrolling their children in the bilingual immersion program.

Parents' written comments on the attitude questionnaires fell into three main categories: reasons for enrolling their children in the Scott School two-way immersion program; comments about teachers and administrators; and parents' reactions to the program and suggestions for improvements. The first group of comments, reasons for enrolling their children, sheds light on the parents' attitudes toward bilingualism as expressed in their responses to the closed-format questionnaire items. These comments provide the context within which to interpret the quantitative results for items 1 through 8 discussed above.

The second and third categories of comments, regarding parental opinions of the teachers and suggestions for improving the two-way program, voice parental satisfactions and concerns about the more academic aspects of the immersion program both as general education and

as language instruction. While these comments provide valuable information about parents' attitudes toward home-school relations, they are not directly related to language attitudes and thus are not included in the following discussion.

### **English-speaking Parents' Comments**

The English-speaking parents gave three major reasons for enrolling their children in the Scott School program: positive exposure to cultural diversity, early second language acquisition, and enhanced career opportunities. Some of the most revealing comments were made in response to the open-ended question which asked parents why they decided to enroll their child in the Scott School two-way immersion program. An English-speaking parent with two children enrolled, one in first and the other in fifth grade, responded that she had enrolled her first child "in order for her to learn a second language, gain understanding of other people and cultures. So that she will not be ethnocentric."

Other English-speaking parents expressed a similar appreciation and valuing of diversity in answer to this item. Typical comments included: "To expose her to an important language in her society and make her more sensitive to ethnic diversity/cultural diversity." "To make sure that my child develops awareness of various languages spoken in the world." "So our child could be exposed to different cultures/people. Maybe to become bilingual." These comments show the parents' concern with instilling an appreciation for diversity in their children and support their positive response to the items (1 and 6) linking bilingualism with increased cross-cultural understanding.

Still other parents valued the opportunity to expose their child to language learning in an atmosphere of ethnolinguistic diversity. While acknowledging the benefits or importance of a culturally diverse learning environment, these parents regarded foreign language acquisition as a primary purpose of the two-way immersion program. Typical responses in this category included: "We wanted our children to be bilingual." "We believe in exposing our children to a multicultural environment." "The opportunity for my son to learn Spanish, the enthusiasm and commitment of Scott School teachers, the learning environment, and the ethnic/racial diversity." "We saw it as a wonderful opportunity for both substantive

gain - learning a foreign language early - and broadening life experience through a bicultural program."

These comments highlight the sociocultural aspect of two-way immersion as enrichment education: it is a program that provides not only "substantive gain" (second language acquisition), but also a "broadening life experience" (a culturally-enriched learning environment). What is striking about the comments reviewed so far is their emphasis on the sociocultural benefits children gain from developing an awareness of linguistic and ethnic diversity. Learning Spanish was not the only, or even the primary, reason for enrolling their child, according to the comments of these English-speaking parents. Thus they seem to view the foreign language instructional program as a vehicle through which their children will develop positive attitudes toward linguistic and cultural diversity through daily interaction with children from a non-English home language background.

Other English-speaking parents cited the intellectual stimulation not only of learning a second language, but of learning through a second language. Two representative comments in this category were: "To make her brain work more, keep it exercised and growing." "We wanted him to be in a program that challenged him to learn as much as possible, and felt that the added requirement to learn Spanish would accomplish that, in addition to acquiring a second language and appreciation of another culture(s)." These parents viewed the two-way immersion program primarily as enrichment education: the parents believed that studying the regular elementary school curriculum through Spanish would be intellectually challenging and stimulating for their children. As such, second language acquisition itself is an attractive but secondary benefit of two-way immersion for these parents.

The second reason the English-speaking parents cited for enrolling their children in two-way immersion was the relative ease of acquiring a second language at a young age: "I wanted my child to have the advantage of learning another language at an early age." "I believe understanding another language is a key to understanding and communicating with other people. It is very hard for an adult to make the time and find the connections to learn another language well. I hope my children will be able to do this by being part of the Scott immersion program." "The U.S. is the only country in which other languages are not taught routinely. I am

trying to learn Spanish now, and it is geometrically more difficult to learn as an adult. The western hemisphere is predominantly Hispanic - we need to know this language."

Like these last two parents, some of the other English-speaking parents mentioned how difficult it was to learn a second language later in life. They valued the opportunity for their children to learn Spanish at a young age and felt that early exposure was a key to developing proficiency.

The third reason the English-speaking parents cited for enrolling their child in two-way immersion was that of future job opportunities for bilinguals. These comments support the parents' highly positive attitude expressed on the survey item (8) citing increased career opportunities as a benefit of bilingualism. Typical comments included: "I feel a second language will benefit my child in future job placements." "Fluency in Spanish as boost in job-hunting as adult." "Because there are many Spanish-speaking people in the U.S. and Spanish is now becoming the second language in the U.S., my child will be prepared to compete for a job in both English and Spanish."

As English-speaking Americans, these parents represent an important segment of the majority-language population that is becoming more aware of the necessity as well as the benefits of individual bilingualism in American society. They joined with parents who supported early childhood second language acquisition and those seeking cultural enrichment for their children to become strong advocates of two-way immersion. Interestingly, a few of the English-speaking parents also cited maintaining a part of their family's non-Anglo ethnic heritage as a benefit of their children's participation in the two-way immersion program: "I want my children to know the language of their grandparents. I want them to have the benefits of being bilingual and the pride in their ancestry that comes from a better understanding of the language and culture." "So she would grow up learning about both cultures since she has one of each at home. Plus she showed great interest in this program."

Comments such as these shed light on the positive attitudes the English-speaking parents demonstrated toward non-English home language maintenance (item 2) and pride in being bilingual (item 4). While ties to family ethnic heritage were mentioned by a few of the English-speaking parents, the majority cited cultural diversity and early

language learning as their reasons for enrolling their children in the program. Thus the English-speaking parents' positive attitudes toward minority language maintenance cannot be attributed only to the bicultural family background of some of the respondents.

In summary, then, three primary benefits - cultural diversity, early second language acquisition, and future job opportunities - were overwhelmingly cited by the English-speaking parents as their reasons for enrolling their children in the two-way immersion program. The parents' comments, as well as their responses to the survey items, illustrate their positive attitude not only toward bilingualism for their own children, but also toward the conservation of the home languages of other ethnolinguistic groups in American society. These attitudes demonstrate an emerging awareness and acceptance on the part of these majority-language parents of the multilingual, multicultural nature of Metro County society and the benefits it confers.

### **Spanish-Speaking Parents' Reasons**

By contrast, the Spanish-speaking parents overwhelmingly cited Spanish language and cultural maintenance as the major reasons for enrolling their children in the two-way immersion program. This is not surprising in view of the highly positive attitudes expressed by the Spanish-speaking parents on the survey item regarding the importance of non-English home language maintenance (item 2). As minority-language members of American society, these parents are intimately aware of the importance of helping their children learn to function in the majority-language culture (see Spanish-speaking parents' response to item 3, importance of English fluency). On the other hand, they prize their own cultural and linguistic roots and wish to pass their ethnic pride on to their children.

The Spanish-speaking parents gave a variety of reasons for supporting minority-language maintenance. Some of the comments focused on the importance of Spanish for family communication [author's Spanish to English translations]: "*Porque necesita saber de su lengua materna.*" [Because it's necessary for him to know his mother tongue.] "*El primer idioma que mi esposo y yo hablamos es castellano; por lo tanto tenemos que mantener comunicación con nuestros hijos y es muy*

*ventajoso para ellos.*" [Spanish is the first language my husband and I speak; therefore, we need (it) to maintain communication with our children, and it is very advantageous for them.]

Other parents cited the necessity or advantage of being able to communicate with other Hispanic people or learn about their cultural background: "*Porque se pueden relacionar con otros niños de su misma raza.*" [So that they can relate to other children of their own race.] "*Porque quiero que mis niños aprendan a leer y escribir nuestro idioma y así aprenderan a estudiar nuestra cultura.*" [Because I want my children to learn to read and write our language so they will be able to study our culture.] "*Porque yo deseo que hable español cuando ella visite mi país.*" [Because I want her to be able to speak Spanish when she visits my country.]

Thus these parents were looking beyond simply preserving family communication in Spanish for their own convenience toward a more world-embracing view of Hispanic culture. Many of the Spanish-speaking parents voiced the concern that their children might lose or forget their native language or ethnic heritage. Some of the reasons these parents gave for enrolling their children in two-way immersion were: "*Para que no pierda su idioma natal, y aprenda a leerlo, escribirlo correctamente.*" [So that he won't lose his native language, and will learn to read and write it correctly.] "*Deseo que mi hijo sea bilingüe.*" [I want my child to be bilingual.] "*No quiero que él se olvide de donde proviene (cultura).*" [I don't want him to forget his cultural origin.] "*Por que no deseo que pierda la lengua materna que es el español.*" [Because I don't want him to lose his mother tongue, which is Spanish.] "*Para que ella tenga mejor futuro y no olvide su lengua maternal.*" [So that she will have a better future and won't forget her mother tongue.] "*Porque no quiero que mis hijas pierdan sus raíces como el español.*" [Because I don't want my daughters to lose their roots, like (the) Spanish (language).] "*Habla mucho inglés. Muy poco español. Necesita aprender y practicarlo mas. Para que **no lo olvide!***" [He speaks English a lot. Not much Spanish. He needs to learn and practice it more. So that **he won't forget it!**]

The fear that their children will lose or abandon their ethnolinguistic roots thus seems to be a primary motivation for Spanish-speaking parents to enroll their children in the two-way immersion program. While the Spanish-speaking parents are concerned about their children maintaining

their native language, these same parents almost unanimously felt that it is "very important for children to understand and use English fluently" in the United States (item 3). Ninety-seven percent (58 of 60) of the Spanish-speaking parents, compared to 90% (54 of 60) of the English-speaking parents, chose "very important" (point 5 on the scale) in response to this question. One family mentioned explicitly their desire that their children, as Hispanic Americans, become both bilingual and bicultural: "*Porque somos de Argentina, y es muy importante que aprendan a amar a los Estados Unidos y su idioma, pero seguir (--?--) la cultura de donde venimos.*" [Because we are from Argentina, and it is very important to learn to love the United States and its language, but to continue (--?--) the culture we come from.]

Thus the desire to maintain Spanish on the part of the Spanish-speaking parents in no way detracts from their determination that their children also become fluent in English. The survey results and these parental comments corroborate the findings of an earlier study (Torres, 1988) of the attitudes of Chicano parents toward the value of bilingual education in both Spanish and English. That study found that Chicano parents with children in the bilingual education program wanted their children to learn English for its economic and educational benefits and to learn or maintain Spanish for both social and economic reasons (Torres, 1988, p. 182).

Another important element of linguistic and cultural maintenance for the Spanish-speaking parents appears to be their desire to instill in their children a sense of pride in their ethnic and cultural heritage. Recall that as a group the Spanish-speaking parents scored slightly higher on the survey items concerning the pride bilingual children would feel in being able to speak two languages (item 4) and their feeling accepted in American society (item 5). Perhaps because for most of the English-speaking children, learning Spanish is not connected with their ethnicity or cultural heritage, their parents were not as aware of the pride their children might take in being bilingual. Moreover, because the English-speaking children already speak the dominant language of society, their parents were not concerned about their children feeling unaccepted in the United States.

For the Spanish-speaking parents, however, their children's pride in their ethnolinguistic heritage (item 4), their sense of being socially accepted (item 5), and their chances of being treated fairly as bilingual

Hispanic Americans (item 7) were important issues. A number of the Spanish-speaking parents' comments eloquently reveal these attitudes: "*En primer lugar quiero que mis hijos sepan mi lengua materna y que no se olviden de que son hijos de Hispanos para que en el futuro se sientan orgullosos.*" [In the first place I want my children to know my mother tongue and not forget that they are children of Hispanics, so that in the future they will feel proud.] "*Para nosotros es un privilegio el tener en una escuela norteamericana este grandioso programa por el cual nos los orgulloso mantener la cultura de nuestros antepasados hoy y siempre.*" [It is a privilege for us to have this great program in a North American school through which we can proudly maintain the culture of our ancestors today and forever.] "*Porque mantenga mi idioma materna que también es lo de el, y que su historia no empiese del momento en que el nació sino que proviene de una cultura rica y sutil de la cual tiene que sentirse orgulloso.*" [In order to maintain my mother tongue, which is also his (mother tongue), and that its history didn't begin the moment he was born but originated in a rich and subtle culture of which he should feel proud.]

While many English-speaking parents wanted cultural diversity for their children, then, the Spanish-speaking parents cited the importance of maintaining their own cultural distinctiveness within the larger American society. For these parents, a primary component of that cultural distinctiveness was the Spanish language and the ability to use it with others at home and abroad.

Like the English-speaking parents, Spanish-speaking parents also acknowledged the practical advantage of bilingualism for their children's future employment: "*Porque es importante que el niño conserve su idioma natal y se sienta orgulloso de él. Además porque ofrece mejores oportunidades en su futuro el ser bilingüe.*" [Because it is important for a child to preserve his native language and to be proud of it. Besides, it offers him better future opportunities if he is bilingual.] "*Para que esté mejor preparada en el futuro. Con dos idiomas tienen mejor oportunidad y mejor empleo.*" [So that she will be better prepared in the future. With two languages, people have more opportunity and better work.] "*Una persona que habla dos idiomas tendrá ventaja siempre, sobre los que hablan uno solo.*" [A person who speaks two languages will always have the advantage over those who speak only one.]

In summary, then, the major reasons the Spanish-speaking parents enrolled their children in the two-way immersion program were to promote linguistic and cultural maintenance, instill a sense of ethnic pride in their children, and increase future employment opportunities for them. These reasons both complement and overlap the English-speaking parents' reasons for enrolling their children in the program. English-speakers wanted exposure to cultural diversity while Spanish-speakers wanted to maintain their cultural and linguistic identity. Both groups wanted second language instruction for their children, possibly resulting in bilingual competence. And both thought that proficiency in a second language would be an economic advantage for their children in the future job market.

All parents saw two-way immersion instruction as uniquely suited to achieving this diverse range of objectives. Moreover, neither group seemed to view their reasons as the only or even the most important ones justifying the existence of the two-way program. Both groups of parents acknowledged that because two-way immersion served the differing needs of the two groups, it benefitted both.

### **Motivations Toward Bilingualism: instructional and Integrative**

In their well-known 1972 study of second language learning, motivation and attitudes, Gardner and Lambert identified two types of motivation: instrumental and integrative. Instrumental motivations can be defined as those that further practical goals such as studying in the second language, getting a job, or using the language in business or travel. Note that while according to Gardner and Lambert's original distinction, integrative motivation meant that the desire to identify with the second language speakers and become a part of their culture, later research has defined the term more broadly. Graham (1984), for example, defines integrative motivation as the desire "to learn the second language in order to communicate with, or find out about, members of the second language culture," while he reserves the term "assimilative" to cover the more narrow "drive to become an indistinguishable member of a speech community" (cited in Brown, 1987, p. 117). Similarly, from his study of English learners in Eastern Europe, Dornyei (1990) proposed three categories of non-instrumental

motivation for learning a foreign language: 1) an interest in foreign people, their languages and cultures; 2) the aspiration to widen one's perspective and become more knowledgeable about the world; and 3) the desire of new life experiences and circumstances.

From the parents' written survey comments discussed in the previous sections, it can be seen that both the English-speaking and the Spanish-speaking groups of parents at Metro School displayed instrumental as well as integrative motivations toward bilingualism for their children. For example, English-speaking parents wanted their children to develop an appreciation for diversity and to be exposed to a culturally diverse learning environment. Their views of a two-way bilingual immersion program as enrichment education focus on the parents' desire that their children learn to understand, appreciate, and value other cultures, languages, and peoples. Clearly, this represents integrative motivations, broadly defined. The Spanish-speaking parents, for the most part, desired to maintain the Spanish language and culture in their families. Because many of the Spanish-speaking children had been born and were attending school in the United States, their parents feared that they would lose their Spanish language competence by the time they were young adults. These parents wanted their children to sense the cultural and linguistic continuity between their Spanish-speaking grandparents, their parents, and themselves, as well as to develop a feeling of belonging to the wider Hispanic cultural community. Like the English-speaking parents, these Spanish-speaking parents clearly displayed integrative motivations toward bilingualism, in that both groups of parents wanted their children to associate with and relate to people outside of the dominant Anglo-American (English-speaking) language and culture group. Thus both groups of parents desired cultural enrichment of their children: for the English-speakers, through learning with and about children of another ethnolinguistic background (in a second language); for the Spanish-speakers, through deepening their knowledge and appreciation of their own language and cultural heritage.

Similarly, both groups of parents claimed instrumental motivations for their children to develop bilingual competence. First, parents in both groups felt strongly that their children, of whatever linguistic background, would be better prepared to compete for jobs and would

advance further in their careers than their monolingual counterparts. In addition, Spanish-speaking parents emphasized the importance of their children quickly becoming proficient in English, the predominant language of daily public life in their adopted society and culture. Finally, from a complementary perspective, the English-speaking parents felt that it was necessary for their children to speak the language and understand the culture of the rapidly-growing Latino community in the United States. These two interlocking viewpoints underscore the parents' recognition that harmony and stability in American society depend upon mutual linguistic and cultural understanding, rather than upon the imposition of the dominant language and culture upon ethnolinguistic minority groups.

### **Implications of the Survey Results for Bilingual Education**

Perhaps the most important finding revealed by the survey is an emerging awareness and acceptance on the part of the English-speaking parents of the multicultural and multilingual nature of the Metro County community and American society as a whole. One English-speaking parent concluded that "two-way immersion is needed to meet the needs of our multicultural society which is rapidly growing," while a bilingual Spanish-English parent asserted that "all schools should have this program. It is successful and it is necessary in order to ease tensions between Americans and Hispanics."

In describing why he had enrolled his son in the Scott School immersion program, one English-speaking parent summarized the newly-emerging local view of bilingual education in Metro County:

My son's previous school had a high percentage of non-English speaking students in all grades. My son's teacher had over 60-70% of the class as non-English speaking. She continually brought this up as a problem and a reason why she couldn't offer him more enrichment in his strong areas and more assistance in his weak areas. On the soccer fields and baseball fields we ran into many children who had been pulled out of public school because of this issue. I spoke with the principal about the issue and received very unenlightened

answers. I had heard of Scott, interviewed and observed and found a very different attitude. The attitude was one of here is an opportunity and a challenge and a way to provide a superior education to all. I loved it!

This parent found that two-way immersion could offer his child the benefits of educational excellence and cultural enrichment, while simultaneously promoting educational opportunity and social recognition for children from non-English-speaking families.

A significant implication of the survey results for the future of local bilingual education programs in the United States, then, is that both the English-speaking and the Spanish-speaking parents accepted the same bilingual education program as one means of satisfying the diverse educational and social needs of their multicultural school district. This is an important change in mainstream attitudes, one that is very different from the traditional view that bilingual education is a compensatory program designed only for socioeconomically disadvantaged non-English-speaking children.

In summary, the attitudes expressed on the Scott School parent survey acknowledge the fact that Metro County has a multicultural population, support the opinion that bilingualism should be encouraged rather than eliminated, and affirm the potential of two-way immersion as a means of providing content-based language instruction for diverse groups of children. The Metro County experience helps clarify the relationship between parental attitudes as an input to school-based planning and the local acceptance and successful implementation of a bilingual program. Moreover, it demonstrates that when a local bilingual education plan takes into account community language attitudes as well as linguistic demographics, it can contribute to a positive redefinition of bilingual education as enrichment instruction promoting second language acquisition and cross-cultural understanding among both English-speaking and language-minority children.

### References

- Agheysi, R., & Fishman, J. (1970). Language attitude studies: A brief survey of methodological approaches. *Anthropological Linguistics*, 12(5), 137-57.
- Brown, H. D. (1987). *Principles of language learning and teaching*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Christian, D., & Mahrer, C. (1992). *Two-way bilingual programs in the United States*. Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics.
- Christian, D., & Mahrer, C. (1993). *Two-way bilingual programs in the United States, 1992-1993 supplement*. Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics.
- Christian, D., & Montone, C. (1994). *Two-way bilingual programs in the United States, 1993-1994 supplement*. Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics.
- Christian, D., and Whitcher, A. (1995). *Two-way bilingual programs in the United States, 1994-1995 revised directory*. Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics.
- Conklin, N. F., & Lourie, M. A. (1983). *A host of tongues*. New York: The Free Press.
- Craig, B. A. (1993). *The public as language planner: Promoting grassroots bilingualism*. Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation. Washington, DC: Georgetown University.
- Crawford, J. (1989). *Bilingual education: History, politics, theory and practice*. Trenton, NJ: Crane.
- Crawford, J. (Ed.) (1992). *Language loyalties: A source book on the official English controversy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Cummins, J. (1989). *Empowering minority students*. Sacramento: California Association for Bilingual Education.
- Dornyei, Z. (1990). Conceptualizing motivation in foreign language learning. *Language Learning*, 40, 45-78.
- Edwards, J. D. (1987, March). Foreign language education for international economic competitiveness: Recent initiatives. *ERIC/CLL News Bulletin*, pp. 1, 5-6.
- Fasold, R. W. (1984). *The sociolinguistics of society*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

- Fishman, J. A. (1966). *Language loyalty in the United States*. The Hague: Mouton.
- Fishman, J. A. (1979/1989). Philosophies of bilingual education in societal perspective. In J. A. Fishman (Ed.), *Language and ethnicity in minority sociolinguistic perspective* (pp. 439-451). Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters.
- Fishman, J. A. (1981). Language policy: Past, present, and future. In C. A. Ferguson & S. B. Heath (Eds.), *Language in the USA* (pp. 516-26). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Fishman, J. A. (1984). Minority mother tongues in education. In J. A. Fishman (Ed.), *Language and ethnicity in minority sociolinguistic perspective* (pp. 465-80). Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters.
- Gardner, R. C., & Lambert, W. E. (1972). *Attitudes and motivation in second language learning*. Rowley, MA: Newbury House.
- Graham, C. R. (1984). *Beyond integrative motivation: The development and influence of assimilative motivation*. Paper presented at the TESOL Convention, Houston, TX, March.
- Hakuta, K. (1986). *The mirror of language: The debate on bilingualism*. New York: Basic Books.
- Lambert, W. E., & Taylor, D. M. (1988). Assimilation versus multiculturalism: The views of urban Americans. *Sociological Forum*, 3 (1), 72-88.
- Lambert, W. E., & Taylor, D. M. (1990). *Coping with cultural and racial diversity in urban America*. New York: Praeger.
- Lindholm, K. J. (1987). Directory of bilingual immersion programs: *Two-way bilingual education for language minority and majority students*. UCLA: CLEAR.
- Lindholm, K. J. (1990). Bilingual immersion education: Criteria for program development. In A. Padilla, H. Fairchild & C. Valadéz (Eds.), *Bilingual education: Issues and strategies* (pp. 91 - 105). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Panetta, L. (1992). The quiet crisis of global competence. *ACTFL Newsletter*, IV (2), 3-4, 11, 15.
- Ruiz, R. (1994). Language policy and planning in the United States. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 14, 111-125.
- Secada, W., & Lightfoot, T. (1993). Symbols and the political context of bilingual education in the United States. In M. B. Arias & U.

- Casanova (Eds.), *Bilingual education: Politics, practice, and research* (pp. 36-64). Chicago: National Society for the Study of Education.
- Shuy, R. W. (1981, Fall). Conditions affecting language learning and maintenance among Hispanics in the United States. *NABE Journal*, 6 (1), 1-17.
- Snow, M. (1989). *Innovative second language education: Bilingual immersion programs*. Los Angeles: CLEAR/UCLA.
- Snow, M., & Hakuta, K. (1988). The costs of monolingualism. In J. Crawford (Ed.), *Language loyalties: A source book on the official English controversy* (pp. 384-94). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Torres, M. E. (1988, Winter). Attitudes of bilingual education parents toward language learning and curriculum and instruction. *NABE Journal*, 12 (2), 171-185.
- Tucker, G. R. (1984). Toward the development of a language-competent American society. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 45, 153-60.
- Tucker, G. R. (1991). Developing a language-competent American society: The role of language planning. In A. G. Reynolds (Ed.), *Bilingualism, multiculturalism, and second language learning* (pp. 65-79). Hillsdale, NJ: L. Erlbaum.
- Veltman, C. (1983). *Language shift in the United States*. Berlin: Mouton.
- Veltman, C. (1988). *The future of the Spanish language in the United States*. Washington, DC: Hispanic Policy Development Project.
- Zelasko, N. F. (1992). *The bilingual double standard: Mainstream Americans' attitudes toward bilingualism*. Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation. Washington, DC: Georgetown University.

## Appendix

### Survey Questions About Personal Bilingualism

1. How has participating in the Scott School program influenced your child's attitude toward children from other cultures?
2. In the United States, how important is it for children to maintain their home language (such as Spanish, Chinese, or Vietnamese) if it is not English?
3. In the United States, how important is it for children to understand and use English fluently?
4. In your opinion, do bilingual children in the U.S. feel a sense of pride in speaking two languages?
5. Do bilingual children in the U.S. feel accepted in society?
6. Are bilingual children in the U.S. more understanding of people from different cultures?
7. Are bilingual children in the U.S. treated unfairly because they speak two languages?
8. Are bilingual children in the U.S. more prepared to find a job in the future?