

Teaching English Language Learners
after Proposition 227:
Reflections of Bilingual Teachers

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Despite almost four decades of concerted efforts by bilingual educators to promote the benefits of native language instruction for English language learners, there has remained strong opposition to bilingual education. Most recently, in California an intense campaign to eliminate instruction in any language other than English led to the passage of Proposition 227, a measure that mandates English immersion instruction for all English language learners. Yet, ironically, this mandate may not have reduced the need for bilingual teachers. For one thing, the instructional approach required by Proposition 227 was originally designed to be taught by teachers who could understand the native language of the students, and research demonstrates it is more effective when there is native language support (Gandara, 2000). In addition to language abilities, bilingual teachers also possess cultural and pedagogical

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cal knowledge that can make them particularly effective with students who are in the process of acquiring English. However, the new law has redefined the roles of bilingual teachers in California classrooms and imposed instructional practices that are in direct conflict with their professional training. As California schools continue to face difficult staffing challenges in critical need areas, including schools with increasing populations of English language learners, attracting and retaining those who may be most qualified to teach these children becomes paramount.

In this article we describe the results of research that explored how Proposition 227 has affected bilingual teachers at varying points in their professional development. The perspectives of preservice, novice and veteran bilingual teachers offer important insights into the impact of this legislation on their students and their teaching. Our findings indicate that bilingual teachers can still make significant contributions to the education of English language learners. The research further reveals factors that continue to motivate and sustain bilingual teachers even when bilingual approaches are replaced by all-English instruction. In light of increasing diversity within the student population, the perspectives of language, learning and culture that these teachers bring to the profession can illuminate important issues related to the needs of English language learners and inequality in schooling. Insights derived from the lived experiences of bilingual and bicultural teachers can help teacher educators to more effectively prepare professionals who can create equitable learning environments and promote challenges to unjust conditions in schools.

Background of Proposition 227

There has always existed considerable controversy surrounding the issue of bilingual education as an effective means of addressing the needs of English language learners. Supporters of bilingual education promote the use of students' native language for instruction so that learning is not delayed while they are acquiring English. Advocates also maintain that developing academic language proficiency in the native language facilitates the acquisition of similar proficiency in English (Cummins, 1994). On the other hand, critics of bilingual education contend that deficiencies in English should be addressed through more time spent on intensive instruction in English. They view time spent on native language instruction as reducing exposure to English and counter-productive (Porter, 1990). To further fuel the debate, research that has examined the effectiveness of bilingual education has produced a variety of differ-

ent outcomes. Contradictory conclusions have resulted from a lack of methodologically sound research methods and a failure to consider factors that can have significant effects on student achievement such as teacher attitudes, quality of teaching, school climate and the sociopolitical context (Cummins, 1996; Flores, Cousin & Diaz, 1991; Greene, 1998; Krashen, 1996).

Although the bilingual education debate often focuses on the research evidence for or against it, the real issue is a political one. The concept that children can learn in their native language while also learning English and eventually achieve academically in English contradicts an American tradition of assimilating immigrants into the mainstream society. To many opponents of bilingual education, encouraging bilingualism and biculturalism threatens the status quo, which promotes the values and language of the dominant group. Underlying the theory of bilingual education is a concern with the differential power relations that exist between dominant and subordinate groups within our society. Thus, despite problems with the research and the complexity of the issues, increasing immigration along with concerns that bilingual education might hinder successful assimilation into the mainstream have led to intense efforts to eliminate native language instruction. In California this opposition resulted in the passage of Proposition 227 in June of 1998 which mandates that all children be taught "overwhelmingly" in English. Although there are provisions within the law that permit parents to request bilingual instruction, many schools throughout the state have now dismantled previously existing bilingual programs and created structured English immersion classes. Structured English immersion is an instructional approach based on the Canadian immersion model in which the target language, in this case English, is taught through the content areas. However, unlike the Canadian model in which the students' native language is valued and developed through instruction, in structured English immersion the native language is used only for occasional clarification (Peregoy & Boyle, 2001; Ramirez, 1992).

The Need for Bilingual Teachers

Changes in school demographic figures indicate that the language minority student population is growing two and a half times faster than the general student enrollment (Minicucci, Berman, McLaughlin, McLeod, Nelson & Woodworth, 1995). Nowhere is this change more notable than in California where 1.4 million students have been classified as English language learners, with native Spanish-speakers comprising 82 percent of this population (California Department of Education, 2000). Shortly

before the implementation of Proposition 227, which eliminated the mandate to provide bilingual education, California was reported to be short 22,000 bilingual teachers (California Department of Education, 1998). Despite the new law, the growing presence of students whose native language is not English indicates that the need for teachers who can understand the language and culture of their students has not waned.

Unfortunately, the state's task of providing sufficient teachers whose skills match the needs of their students is complicated by several factors. First, while projections are that the student population will continue to be characterized by diversity, the majority of teachers and those in teacher preparation programs are White, monolingual English speakers, many of whom lack the desire, skills, or confidence needed to effectively teach in multicultural settings (Sleeter, 1994). Secondly, fewer bilingual teachers (specifically Latinos) are entering the profession (Diaz-Rico & Smith, 1994; Galindo, 1996). This problem stems from a declining trend in the representation of people of color among those preparing to become teachers. Research addressing this issue points to a number of circumstances that prevent or dissuade minorities from entering teaching. Some of these include: stringent credentialing and testing requirements, financial barriers, a lack of role models and mentors, and oppressive value systems within teacher education (Diaz-Rico & Smith, 1994; Monsivais, 1990). Finally, a considerably high attrition rate exists among bilingual classroom teachers. Research suggests that bilingual teacher attrition may be related to one or more of the following factors: greater than average preparation and work loads, limited access to primary language materials, conflicting teaching philosophies and lack of support from the public, school administrators and colleagues (Ada, 1986; Gonzalez & Sosa, 1993; López del Bosque, 1994).

The critical shortage of teachers who are prepared to teach an increasingly diverse student population has presented significant staffing challenges to California schools. This challenge has been exacerbated by the implementation of a measure to reduce class sizes in primary grades requiring more teachers. Additionally, the passage of Proposition 227 may contribute to a perception that bilingual teachers are no longer needed, a belief that could likely have an adverse effect on the supply and demand of such teachers for the state's English learners (Gandara, 2000).

Methodology

Between the fall of 1998 and the spring of 2000 we interviewed 44 bilingual elementary classroom teachers from 11 different school dis-

tricts. These participants included 31 novice teachers who had been teaching three years or less as well as 13 veterans who had five or more years of bilingual teaching experience. Interviews were also conducted with 12 preservice elementary teacher candidates who were enrolled in teacher preparation courses and had participated in fieldwork in schools but who were not yet employed as teachers. Both the novice and preservice teachers were enrolled in a university program leading to the Bilingual Cross-cultural Language and Academic Development (BCLAD) credential, which is the bilingual teaching certification in California. All participants were bilingual in English and Spanish and all except 10 of the practicing teachers and two of the teacher candidates were Latinas for whom Spanish was the primary language.

The veteran bilingual teacher participants were selected for this research based on previous professional associations as well as recommendations from colleagues who were familiar with successful bilingual education programs and teachers who implement them. All of the novice teachers were in the process of completing credential requirements and thus were enrolled along with the preservice teachers in teacher preparation courses at the same university.

Individual interviews were conducted with each participant. Interviews with the classroom teachers focused on how Proposition 227 had affected their professional lives. The preservice teachers were asked how this legislation had affected their fieldwork experiences in schools and in what ways it might impact their future teaching. A semi-structured interview format was utilized which enabled consistency across participants yet also allowed for the exploration of new concepts and issues that were raised by the participants. All interviews were audio taped and transcribed for analysis. Interviews ranged from 30 to 90 minutes in length. Transcripts of interviews were analyzed using qualitative coding procedures suggested by Bogdan and Biklen (1992).

Results

Although the individuals that we interviewed had different experiences and thus had unique responses, there were seven common themes that emerged regarding the effects of Proposition 227 on their work as bilingual teachers in schools.

Frustrations About Instructional Constraints

The preservice teachers expressed disappointment that children could not receive more support in the native language, however, those

who were employed as teachers conveyed a great deal of frustration with the new law's restrictions. As the following comments indicate, these bilingual classroom teachers believed that the limitations on native language instruction greatly impaired their ability to teach effectively:

I'm trying to teach my kids English and concepts at the same time. That's very hard, very hard. You are trying to teach them what they don't know yet and in another language. And they don't always get it. They need so much more help and there is really no where they can get help because their parents speak only Spanish. . . All of my kids speak Spanish but I'm not supposed to teach in Spanish, I'm supposed to teach in English. (Erica, First Year Teacher)

We got the second grade reading texts but they're all in English and my kids can't read them. I mean, I'm exposing them to the reading selections in those texts, but they can't read them. So I've had to go find some of the older preprimers and whatnot that the teachers are discarding at the first grade level so that we can have something to read. (Karen, 6 years of bilingual teaching experience)

I'm so frustrated because it's obviously unfair. . . I mean, how can I teach my kids to read and write in English when they don't understand a word I'm saying? . . . I mean that I am just sitting there doing cut and paste activities and "Stand up, move around, touch this, touch that, and point here" activities with the kids while the other first grade kids are learning to read and write in the English-only classes. (Maria, 6 years of bilingual teaching experience)

Concerns About Adverse Effects on Students

The preservice teachers noted that in their fieldwork experiences they had often observed students who could benefit from but were not able to receive native language support due to the implementation of Proposition 227 guidelines. The classroom teacher participants, especially those with more experience in bilingual teaching, were more adamant about the negative impact that this law was having on their students:

If I could use more Spanish, especially for reading, I know the kids could connect more. And if they were allowed to use their first language the parents could be much more supportive of the education program at home. (Lupe, First Year Teacher)

I haven't been able to get into the really neat stuff that I normally would use to connect with them immediately like all of the traditional rhymes, authentic stories and verses from home that they can relate to and that their parents can help them with. So the connection to their parents is already starting to be strained because they're learning all this English and their parents are very impressed with that, but I just feel that those

kids don't have a very positive attitude about Spanish anymore. It's like they already sense the stigma . . . (Julie, 16 years of bilingual teaching)
I just hate what 227 is doing to the kids. . . I have to speak to them in English and I have to read stories to them in English and they beg me, "Teacher, please read it to us in Spanish. Please, please, please." I hate it . . . It's like saying, "English is better, kids." It's just awful. I don't like it. (Maria, 6 years of bilingual teaching)

The classroom teachers were particularly concerned that although students may appear to be making good progress in spoken English, this often masks a lack of in-depth understanding which eventually has an adverse effect on student progress as the curriculum makes increasing demands on their ability to comprehend complex language.

Everyone is really excited thinking that the kids are learning all this stuff, but it's not really as much as they think because, yeah, the kids know the basic skills in English, but their academic English is still very low. Sometimes it takes them a long time to grasp the concept and sometimes you think, "Yeah, the whole class is doing well overall." But then you talk to them individually and you find out there are so many kids that really aren't getting it. (Rose, First Year Teacher)

Sometimes you think, "Ok, they are picking it up, they'll be fine." But then you find out that the comprehension is really lacking and that will be a great problem they will face as they go through school . . . I remember people saying, "Yeah, there are those who succeed but what about all those you don't hear about, you just don't see." I think that I can see that happening. (Erica, First Year Teacher)

Yeah, I can dictate and they can write. I can read a story in English and they can give me a fairly simple summary of what it was about with phonetic writing, but the comprehension is not always there. And people get so excited like, "Oh, they're writing in English" or "They're speaking in English", but they don't look at the quality of their writing . . . and I hope we don't get so caught up in the enthusiasm that they're uttering a few words in English that we miss the fact that they may not be getting all of these concepts. (Karen, 6 years of bilingual teaching experience)

Fear, Intimidation, Tension

One of the more unfortunate consequences of Proposition 227 reported by all participants was the sense of fear, intimidation, and tension it created for many bilingual teachers. The emphasis placed on following prescribed guidelines concerning use of students' native language and the intense scrutiny by others in their schools led many of the respondents to believe that they had to be very cautious about how they spoke

about bilingual education and under what circumstances they spoke in Spanish to their students. The following comments illustrate these concerns:

I have to really watch what I say because I don't want to get sued by parents. I have to be careful how I state things when parents ask for my opinion. I tell them the research, but I also tell them to do their own research. I don't just say, "Bilingual education is good, you should put your child in the program." I am very careful what I say. (Ana, Second Year Teacher)

I don't feel comfortable speaking any language other than English. When I speak Spanish for clarification, I kind of whisper it to a student, which is not a positive example. (Erica, Preservice Teacher)

We even have to be careful how we talk about bilingual education. We don't call it bilingual anymore, we call it "alternative." We don't dare say the word "bilingual" because everyone is so negative about it. (John, First Year Teacher)

Some of the participants also reported incidents of conflict with colleagues who held negative attitudes about bilingual education and even attempt to intimidate them into avoiding any use of the students' native language.

Other teachers have tried to intimidate me. They would come up to me at the beginning of the year and say things like, "Push those kids into English, English only, that's what they need." Those teachers had been there awhile and I was new so I didn't know what to do. I mean, I love Spanish and I love my culture, why were they trying to take that away from these kids? (Hilda, First Year Teacher)

We went on a walking fieldtrip . . . We were walking, crossing the streets and I wanted to make sure everybody was safe so I had to speak in Spanish. I had one parent call the school the next day, an English only-parent who complained that I was breaking the law because I was speaking in Spanish . . . I feel like I am being watched by certain people and I can't make a false move. (Martha, First Year Teacher)

Political Consciousness

All of the participants made either implicit or explicit references to the racist and discriminatory undertones of Proposition 227. Perceived as yet another "anti-immigration/anti-Latino" legislative attempt, many of the Latina teachers believed that Proposition 227 was not only a personal affront to their language, culture and community, but also their profession. As Rosa, one of the Latina teachers angrily stated, "They tried to go after Latinos with immigration (referring to Proposition 187) . . . It's like

they think, 'Now let's go after them in education!' I just thought, 'Oh no, here we go again.' ”

Some of the participants' comments also revealed recognition of power relations at work within the wider society, which then became reflected in their own school settings. They were very conscious of the fact that existing tensions were not just about issues of language but about the dominant group working to preserve its interests.

There are so many parents that are being told, “Your child needs to be taught only in English” and then they see on TV and everywhere how negatively bilingual education is shown . . . It's like nobody wants them to know the advantages of bilingual education. (Alma, Preservice Teacher)

Bilingual education was an empowerment, a way to empower minorities . . . and it was a thought out plan, kind of like Affirmative Action. We saw this problem where minorities had less [sic] opportunities in our society so they came up with Affirmative Action to change that and to make things more equitable. But as soon as it started to hurt the majority, they voted it out (referring to Proposition 209). And I think the same thing happened with bilingual education . . . The parents were becoming empowered and the students were learning English better and were being more successful in schools so they could go on and get better jobs . . . so this was starting to be successful and so they voted it out because it was a threat. (Kim, 15 Years of Bilingual Teaching Experience)

Recognition That Their Knowledge and Skills Are Still Needed

Despite the many conflicts and dilemmas created by the implementation of Proposition 227 all of the participants expressed a strong sense of confidence that they were still fulfilling a needed role in the education of English Language Learners. They recognized that their cultural knowledge, bilingual skills, and specialized training were valuable assets in their work. Many of the teachers as well as teacher candidates described how they could employ their bilingual skills to support their students' learning, even while teaching within structured English immersion settings:

I would just get these blank stares—I mean they look at you and look at you, until finally you think, “Oh, God, OK, I'll translate a little bit.” You know, you have to do everything you can do to meet their needs . . . I'm used to being able to communicate with them in either language so if they don't understand me in English, I can always fall back on Spanish and they understand me. And so it's a nice comfort zone for everybody. If I know I can give them that comfort zone then I will. (Heidi, 15 years of bilingual teaching experience)

I am able to use 20 percent or so of the native language, so I can still help the kids in that way. I use Spanish literature and I translate some things and all those things are very important. So, even though you're not allowed to teach the curriculum the way you would like, you can still support kids' learning. (Lupe, First Year Teacher)

You have to know and follow the guidelines of your school but at the same time, when you're within the four walls of your classroom, you do what you need to do to get the child to understand concepts. If I need to, I will use Spanish to support my students' learning. (Annie, Preservice Teacher)

I think a lot of our role [that of the bilingual teacher] now should be to support the students who should be taught in Spanish but aren't and to support them however we can. If they are looking at you like they don't know then you can use the primary language. Even though I am not in a bilingual classroom, I can guide my students and give them the support. (Suzie, First Year Teacher)

Several of the participants indicated that their sensitivity to the needs of English learners and their knowledge of Latino culture made them particularly effective with their students. They believe that shared social and cultural experiences help them to empathize with students and establish a special rapport. As one participant noted, "I know what it's like to learn a second language and I know that you don't become bilingual in a year, in two years or in three years—it's very difficult."

Bilingual Teachers Serve as a Liaison Between Home and School

Many of the participants related that their skills and biculturalism also provide an important support system for the parents of their students and that parents often look to them for guidance in understanding school policies and practices. They frequently spoke about their role as a liaison between the school and the community, and of their ability to relate to community concerns.

Many times parents come to me. They will say, "What's this paper for? What am I signing?" And I translate for them and explain it. All of the parents, even if they are not in my class, come to me and ask me for help because they know I speak Spanish and understand them. I feel valued by the parents. Sometimes it's overwhelming like when there's (sic) so many messages to relay to other teachers at my school, but I feel valued and needed. (Martha, First Year Teacher)

When I went through the schooling system, I was translating for my parents, or an older brother had to translate what the teachers couldn't. And now here I am, I am able to speak in Spanish to the parents and

they will tell me how they don't understand the language, or they can't write, and I say, "You remind me of my mom." I can totally relate to them . . . I try to make them feel comfortable, try to make it easier because I know my parents didn't have it easy. (Erica, First Year Teacher)

Sometimes it's not a very friendly atmosphere at the school. And I'd say that for most of the schools I've worked in. A lot of administrators just don't want to deal with the parents . . . I feel that I'm providing a service that's not there—I'm a "bridge" for them — like a liaison between the parents and the school and being able to get their voices heard. (Lorena, 9 years of bilingual teaching experience)

I talk to parents all the time and try to help them with all their questions about the school. I see how much they need bilingual people in the schools who can help parents. (Alma, Preservice Teacher)

Significantly, several of the participants indicated that they played a crucial role in keeping parents informed about their options as provided within Proposition 227. These teachers were involved in individual conferences or group meetings with parents to clarify the different programs available for their children in more understandable terms than those offered in official district correspondence.

Staying Committed in the Post-227 Era

One of the strongest themes to emerge was a sense of commitment to teaching despite the frustrations and limitations imposed on their professional work. Many of the respondents related that in some ways Proposition 227 has strengthened their determination to ensure students' success:

I have my bad days; I've had a lot of them this year ever since I started doing this (implementing Proposition 227) . . . But I'm committed to the kids and I think this program is hurting them. But I think if I left them now, it would hurt them even more. My commitment is to them—not to my administrator, not to my district, it's to them. (Maria, 6 years of bilingual teaching experience)

These kids are still going to learn no matter what . . . (I'm determined) to make it work for them because there's a lot of people out there making decisions that don't know and it's affecting my students. So I have to do what I can to make it work for them in spite of what politicians come up with. (Sonia, 8 years of bilingual teaching experience)

There are many days that I just don't feel like staying with it, but I know that they would be so upset and disappointed if I didn't show up the next day . . . I am a role model for them and if I give up, what is that telling

them? Because it would be easy for me to leave, I've done it before, but I've learned that's not a solution. (Lorena, 9 years of bilingual teaching experience)

This [implementation of Proposition 227] has just made me stronger in my beliefs about bilingual education and why I need to work with these kids. (Emma, Preservice Teacher)

Discussion and Implications

All of our participants expressed frustration about the constraints imposed by Proposition 227 on their teaching and serious concerns regarding the potential adverse consequences for their students. These findings are consistent with other research that has examined the reactions of bilingual educators to the implementation of this legislation (Maxwell-Jolly, 2000; Palmer & Garcia, 2000). Significantly, those who had the most bilingual teaching experience conveyed a greater sense of indignation regarding the law's restrictive measures than did the novice or preservice teachers. The forceful and passionate opposition voiced by the veteran teachers could be the result of their many years observing students' academic success in bilingual programs. Most of the novice teachers and preservice teachers had very limited experience working in bilingual instructional settings. Thus, the extent to which these teachers had opportunities to directly observe positive outcomes of native language instruction and support could have influenced their reactions. A further consideration is that novice teachers without tenure status and prospective teachers seeking employment lack teaching experience in general and may not have the confidence to express opposition to school policies or instructional approaches about which they have scant first-hand knowledge.

A significant finding is that while these bilingual educators are dismayed about the new policies regulating native language instruction, three main factors continue to sustain and motivate them to remain in teaching, whether they were new to the profession or seasoned veterans. Foremost, all expressed a belief that their knowledge of students' language and culture as well as learning needs was critical to successfully teaching them. Although conscious of their schools' guidelines restricting native language support, these bilingual educators worked within those guidelines to provide their students with the support they required. Secondly, the participants conveyed an awareness of the important contributions they can make to facilitate parents' understanding of an unfamiliar and often inhospitable school system. Many of the participants had played a key role in explaining school policies and the program options provided by

Proposition 227. Finally, all of these educators were deeply committed to ensuring the success of their Latino students. Regardless of the restrictions imposed on their teaching, all of our respondents were determined to help their students achieve academically.

Our data from these interviews also revealed that in many instances the implementation of Proposition 227 created a hostile climate for bilingual teachers in their schools. Teachers reported strained interactions, personal harassment and the perception that they were being overly scrutinized. Moreover, some recognized that the conditions they faced in their schools reflected power struggles within the wider society between dominant and subordinate groups. The tensions and negative school climates described by our participants as a consequence of Proposition 227 are disturbing and supports the research of others who have investigated the impact of this legislation (Rubio & Attinasi, 2000; Stritikus & Garcia, 2000). These findings raise the question of how such conditions might affect the retention of bilingual teachers who, despite their best intentions, may find themselves unable to successfully cope with the high level of stress. Educators need to seriously consider the development of support networks to prevent the loss of bilingual teachers currently in schools where the prevailing climate may not be conducive to maintaining their morale. There should be consistent and ongoing opportunities for bilingual teachers to engage in dialogue that can help to affirm their work and nurture their professional development. Such opportunities could be provided through collaboration across schools and even across districts.

It is also significant to note that some research suggests that a strong factor in what sustains bilingual teachers in their work is the satisfaction that comes from seeing the progress and success students have been able to achieve in bilingual programs (Hanson, 2000). Thus, greater emphasis should be placed on ways that teachers can observe students' achievement within structured English immersion settings. This calls for the development of assessments specifically designed to show that English learners are making progress, a feat that traditional measures have thus far failed to do. The use of developmental and criterion assessment tools can benefit both teachers and parents in getting a better sense of students' strengths and needs in specific skill areas.

Our findings raise important implications for teacher education. The first is that it is essential to continue intentional recruitment of bilingual teacher candidates into the profession. Given the misconceptions surrounding the implementation of Proposition 227, many potential credential candidates who are bilingual and bicultural may not be fully aware of the extent to which their skills are needed in schools. Further, some

recent research into the effects of Proposition 227 indicates that there may now exist a reduced demand for qualified bilingual teachers within many school districts (Gandara, 2000; Maxwell-Jolly, 2000). Yet, clearly, the knowledge and skills that bilingual teachers possess can continue to benefit children and families in bilingual communities regardless of the language of instruction. We must dispel the myth that bilingual educators are no longer needed. As more English language learners are forced to contend with schooling practices that disregard their linguistic and cultural identities, they will require teachers who are able to redefine school conditions to foster their success.

Secondly, teacher educators should enlist the aid of veteran bilingual teachers to share their perspectives and knowledge of successful instructional strategies with prospective bilingual as well as monolingual teacher candidates in university courses. Given the crucial need to prepare teachers to work in diverse settings, such an alliance between bilingual- bicultural classroom teachers and university faculty could make a significant contribution to the professional development of all teacher candidates. It could also serve to recognize and validate the work of bilingual teachers and support their retention.

Finally, teacher educators must incorporate critical analysis of existing conditions of societal inequity as an integral part of their programs for all prospective teachers. Some of our participants were very conscious of the social and political forces that shaped educational policy. Such a critical consciousness can help support and nurture a personal and collective empowerment that can enable challenges to inequitable conditions (Freire, 1970). Preparing teachers who can make a positive difference in the education of children from diverse backgrounds requires not only that they be knowledgeable about culturally sensitive and pedagogically appropriate practices but also that they develop the capacity to become student advocates who can critique and transform conditions of schooling. Moreover, teacher education must help bilingual teachers to re-envision their work as more than just instructing students in the primary language; it must enable them to identify and improve the problematic conditions they may find at their schools.

Although the implementation of Proposition 227 in California has led to many changes for bilingual teachers, their skills can continue to benefit English language learners and enable them to more effectively understand the needs of the communities in which they teach. Taking proactive measures to recruit and retain greater numbers of bilingual teachers in the post-Proposition 227 era will not only benefit the students and parents with whom these teachers work, but also the wider educational community in terms of the knowledge and expertise they have to offer.

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