Bilnigual Education Essay, Research Paper

Imagine being brought up in a family speaking only one language for your entire life and then you had to move to a foreign land where the language is different. If you had a choice of progressively learning this new language over the course of six to nine years or being put into a classroom and have to virtually teach yourself the language by listening to others around you which would you choose? Late exit bilingual education is a more effective form of bilingual education compared to the English immersion form of bilingual education in the fact that there are more benefits and less adverse effects. There are many reasons why late exit bilingual education should be the choice of public schools everywhere with high minority populations. One of the effects of late exit bilingual education is that the students would be able to maintain their cultural background instead of having to give up one or the other. Language is a big part of a person s culture. Late exit bilingual education gives the non-English speaking students more time to master the English language which is not an easy language to learn in three years as the English immersion strategy teaches. The findings of the Ramirez team in 1991 evaluating the effectiveness of English immersion, early exit bilingual education, and late exit bilingual education further prove why late exit bilingual education is the one that needs to be used.

To look at why keeping one s culture is important one just needs to look at how and why this country was founded. The first Americans from England came here so they wouldn t have to conform to everything the rulers of England wanted. Immigrants founded this country. One of the greatest things about the United States is that there are so many different types of cultures everywhere you look. It is true that one needs to learn the English language to be successful, but forcing one to give up his or her cultural background is going against everything this country stands for. English immersion does just that by forcing the student to give up his or her cultural background and language (Faltis 191). Late exit bilingual education allows the child to progress effectively through the educational system with the instruction given in English to the extent to make this possible (Schneider, 1976, p. 128.).

To throw a student into a classroom that speaks a language that is not familiar to them and forcing them to adjust in three years like English immersion does is not fair to the student. A sink or swim technique is not very beneficial and can cause more harms than good. The English language takes longer than that to gain mastery in even for people who have a firm English base to start from. The expected time to master the English language is anywhere from four to nine years for the average person (Collier, 1992). Students who don t have time to develop their L1 or English will not succeed in all-English classrooms (Cummins, 1981). Time is needed for development, which is just not offered with English immersion. I was in a class with three Hispanic immigrants while I was in high school. They knew no English and were forced to adapt to the all-English environment through English immersion. The classes were difficult for English speaking students let alone students who didn t understand what was going on around them. As expected by the observers of these students, the immigrant students passed the class with D- s only because the teacher felt it was the best thing for them. We need to realize that these non-English speaking students and other like them who go through the English immersion program will graduate from high school by the mercy of teachers and will not be prepared to be successful in the so-called real world . This leads me to statistics that further the notion that late exit bilingual education is more effective than English immersion. These results were published in the Ramirez report.

The Ramirez report contains some very important evidence that suggests late exit bilingual education is the more beneficial program to use. By looking at the report it is clear that even teachers of the English immersion strategy believe that many of the students in their classes would be better off if they remained in the program for more than the three years that it takes now. The report has evidence that suggests the students should be provided with instruction in their primary language until they are able to profit from the English only instruction. Another important detail that came out of the Ramirez study was that the home language of the student should be used for instruction and as a way for parents to assist their children in their learning. Parental involvement appears to be the greatest in the late exit program. The study suggests that schools should explore how they might use the students home language to get the parents involved in the schooling of their children.

Whether it s from the Ramirez report, my personal experiences, or the fact that it takes more than three years to even get close to mastering the English language it is clear to see that the English immersion program is not the way to go, but rather late exit bilingual education. If public schools want to prepare the minority student for the world after high school they need to use late exit bilingual education and give them the best chance to succeed while at the same time allowing them to keep there cultural and native language. It is clear that there are more benefits to late exit bilingual education compared to English immersion.