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6852 HOUSE HEALTH EDUCATION & SOCIAL SERVICES

emerging consensus with respect to some of the components that are important for promoting educational achievement and personal development among aboriginal students. These components are integrated in the theoretical framework presented in the next section.

## A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR PROMOTING LANGUAGE AND LITERACY DEVELOPMENT AMONG ABORIGINAL STUDENTS

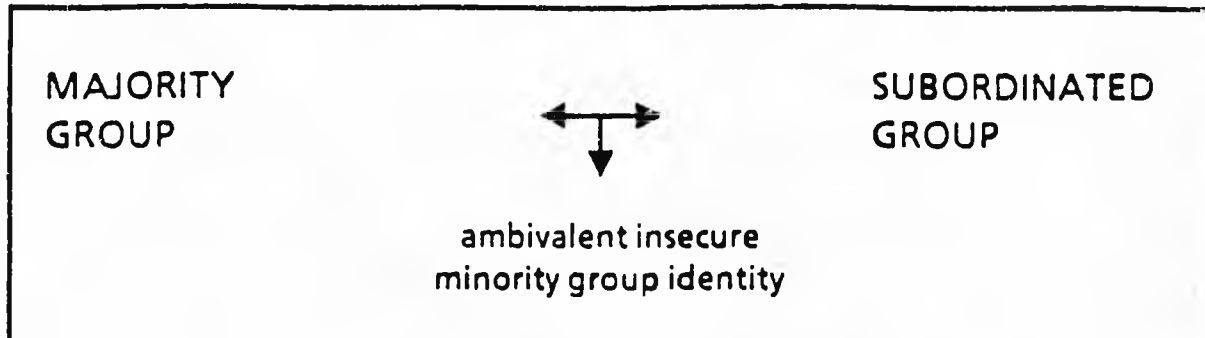
When the patterns of school success and failure by minority students are considered across a wide range of societal contexts, three sets of causal factors can be identified as major contributors to students' academic difficulties. First is poverty and its attendant familial and social consequences for children. Second, is the sense of ambivalence about the value of their cultural identity and powerlessness in relation to the dominant group that appears to characterize many minority groups that fail academically. This is what Ogbu (1978) refers to as "castelike" status and its educational effects are strikingly evident in many situations where formerly subjugated or colonized groups are still in a subordinate relationship to the dominant group. For example, the three groups in the United States context that experience the most pronounced educational difficulty (Black, Hispanic and Native students) have each subordinated for centuries by the dominant group (see Cummins, 1989).

The third major factor concerns what happens in the educational system. Historically, the failure of poor and minority children was attributed to individual or community factors such as "low IQ", genetic inferiority, poor motivation, "cultural deprivation" etc. As pointed out by Mackay (in press), this attribution process tends to screen the educational system from critical scrutiny. It is clear from the review of aboriginal students' achievement patterns and the effects of educational interventions that factors related to schooling play a major role in determining school failure or success among aboriginal and other minority students. Although students may be "at risk" as a result of one or both of the two broad sets of factors noted above (i.e. poverty and disempowered status), it is the cumulative effect of students' interactions with educators in the school context that most directly affects academic development.

The types of interventions that are implied by the research can be summarized in terms of four categories as outlined in Table 1 (Cummins, 1989):

**Cultural/Linguistic Incorporation.** Historically, schools actively set out to eradicate (or

# SOCIETAL CONTEXT



## EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT

### EDUCATOR ROLE DEFINITIONS

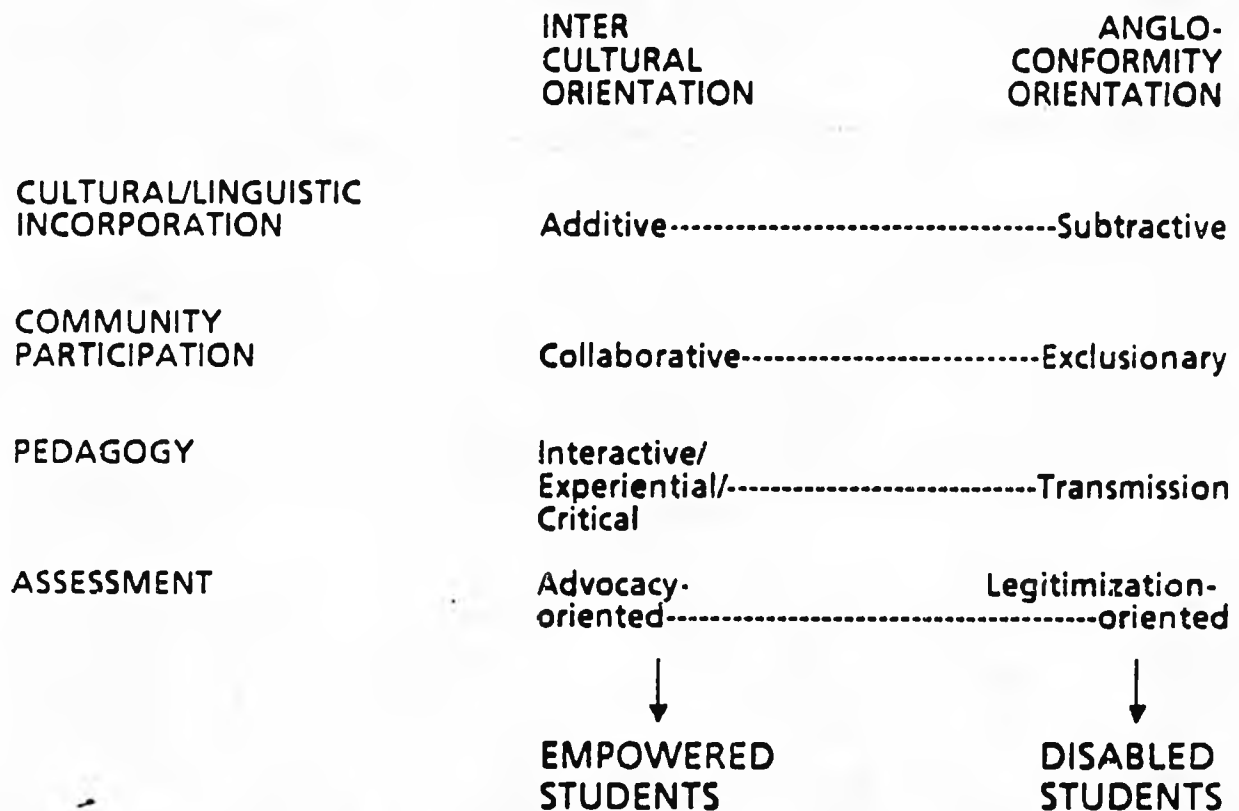


Figure 5.1 Empowerment of Minority Students: A Framework for Intervention

"subtract") the language and culture of minority students, often through physical punishment for speaking the home language. Students' failure was frequently attributed to bilingualism or to "verbal deprivation" resulting from non-standard forms of English. Virtually all the case studies and research reports that document successful academic performance on the part of at-risk minority students incorporate the promotion of a sense of pride in students' culture and identity. In the case of bilingual students, this will usually involve teaching the L1 within the school context and/or using it as a medium of instruction (see Burnaby, 1980 and Faries, 1989 for discussion of models of Native language instruction). Valorization of minority students' language and culture directly addresses the ambivalence about their identity that students and communities often feel as a result of current and historical patterns of discrimination. ▽

**Community Participation** Parental involvement and direct community participation in the operation of the school is stressed both in the *Indian Control of Indian Schools* position paper (National Indian Brotherhood, 1972) and in all the effective schools research as a critical factor in promoting student academic growth. Once again, the encouragement of parental involvement in a non-condescending way is addressing the sense of powerlessness that characterizes many aboriginal communities. The increased sense of efficacy and purpose experienced by parents as a result of this partnership with the school appears likely to be communicated to their children with positive effects on students' own academic involvement.

Clearly the initiative for community involvement does not rest only with the school. As Littlebear (1990) points out, the community itself must mobilize its resources for transmission of language from one generation to the other:

"What are effective language education practices? The most effective are those which have been in use for thousands of years; those done by the family. If we are serious about preserving our languages and cultures, we must start using our languages daily and everywhere. We must talk to our children in our own languages and share with them the positive sides of our past and contemporary cultures. ... the parents and elders represent the most effective language learning and teaching practices that we can utilize to ensure the survival of our languages and cultures. ~~We must re-habilit the value of our languages and cultures in the family unit and not just hope the schools will do it for us~~" (1990, p. 3).

It is worth noting that in the case of both cultural/linguistic incorporation and community participation, the school and community are actively involved in reversing a power relation between dominant and subordinated groups that has existed, and still does exist, in the wider society. For example, promotion of aboriginal languages in the school is reversing the historical message communicated to aboriginal children and communities that their language and culture were inferior. It may seem obvious that this is what schools ought to

be doing but it is quite a radical departure for schools to take a proactive role in challenging (rather than reflecting) many of the values and priorities of the dominant group in society.

**Pedagogy.** Two major orientations can be distinguished with respect to pedagogy. These differ in the extent to which the teacher retains exclusive control over classroom interaction as opposed to sharing some of this control with students. These orientations can be termed *transmission* and *critical, interactive, experiential* respectively. When teachers view their role as transmitting a body of information and skills to students, students are frequently relegated to passive internalization of knowledge (as documented in Mackay's study reviewed above). The problem with this approach is that validation of students' identity is impossible when their experience is excluded from the classroom; by the same token, promotion of students' language proficiency is impossible when students' "voice" is denied expression in the classroom. Also, for students from subordinated groups, the development of a critical awareness (Freire's notion of *conscientization*) is crucial to understand the forces that historically and currently limit possibilities for personal and academic growth.

In implementing an interactive/experiential form of pedagogy, the teacher must be sensitive to the cultural patterns of interaction in many aboriginal communities. For example, learning by observation (looking and listening) is the norm in many communities. However, this does not imply that these children are passive learners and instruction that confines them to passive roles will elicit minimal learning.

In short, the pedagogy must give students ample opportunities to use language in contextualized (e.g. cooperative learning groups) and decontextualized (e.g. creative writing) ways to explore and reflect on experience and possibilities. The focus on drama in the Saskatoon Native Survival School shows clearly how empowering for students this type of pedagogy can be.

**Assessment.** Historically in North America, psychological assessment has served to legitimize the educational disabling of minority students by locating the academic "problem" within the student himself or herself. This has had the effect of screening from critical scrutiny the subtractive nature of the school program, the exclusionary orientation of teachers towards minority communities, and transmission models of instruction that inhibit students from active participation in learning.

The alternative role definition that is required to reverse the traditional "legitimizing" function of assessment can be termed an "advocacy" role. The assessment specialist must become an advocate for the child in scrutinizing critically the social and educational context.

within which the child has developed (see Crago, 1989, for an insightful discussion of these issues in the Inuit context).

In summary, the theoretical framework outlined above incorporates a set of researchable hypotheses regarding the outcomes of certain types of intervention for aboriginal students. These proposed interventions are based both on an analysis of the outcomes of previous Anglo-Conformity educational programs for aboriginal students and on the characteristics of interventions that appear to have been successful in creating conditions for aboriginal student empowerment.

## CONCLUSION AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Few would dispute the fact that language is intimately tied to the sense of identity that individual children develop in their preschool and school years. This individual sense of identity, in turn, reflects and contributes to the collective sense of identity of a people. We express *our selves* both individually and collectively through language. As expressed in the Language Policy of the Northern Ute Tribe in Arizona, "The voice of the land is in our language" (quoted in Arizona State Department of Education, 1987, p. 7).

Suppression of aboriginal languages in schools over generations was explicitly intended as an assault on the individual and collective identity of aboriginal peoples and has contributed significantly to the disempowerment of aboriginal peoples (as illustrated in many social problems faced by communities). Significantly, the revitalization of identity which is illustrated in the renewed political activism of many aboriginal groups across the country, has been accompanied by concrete policies and programs to halt the decline of aboriginal languages. The educational policies of the past which frequently instilled a sense of shame about language, culture and religion in aboriginal children, together with the power of English as the language of television and the electronic media, have resulted in rapid language shift, especially among younger people, and a shrinking in the functions that aboriginal languages serve within communities. As outlined above, ambivalence towards the home culture and alienation from the dominant culture is a characteristic pattern among minority students that tend to fail academically (e.g. Ogbu, 1978).

Thus, policies and programs designed to revitalize aboriginal languages also incorporate the twin goals of revitalizing the personal and cultural identities of aboriginal students and promoting confidence in their ability to succeed academically. In other words, any consideration of language development must be based on the fact that language is the expression of self and thus the overall goal of aboriginal language revitalization programs

is individual and collective empowerment.

The directions that communities, educators and policy-makers can pursue to promote these goals follow from the intervention framework outlined above. In the first place, a variety of programs to support aboriginal language development should be instituted, as is being done in many contexts. These programs may include full immersion and/or bilingual programs for students whose command of the aboriginal language is limited or non-existent (as in the Six Nations reserve near Brantford and the Kahnawake School near Montreal), bilingual programs designed to develop a conceptual foundation in the L1 among students who speak the L1 at home (as in the Kativik and Baffin programs for Inuit students), teaching the aboriginal language as a subject within the regular school day either for maintenance or acquisition purposes (as in many communities across Canada).

The research data are very clear that reinforcement of the aboriginal language in all of these types of programs will have no adverse effects on development of English or French academic skills. Many of the international examples of bilingual programs, in fact, suggest that academic skills in the major school language are enhanced when the child continues to develop his/her aboriginal language (e.g. Christie, 1985; Gale, McClay, Christie, & Harris, 1981; Modiano, 1973).

The same considerations apply in situations where the aboriginal language is not being taught (either at the elementary or secondary level), for example, in off-reserve schools or urban settings. Teachers should strive to communicate acceptance and respect for the culture and language of aboriginal children. One simple way of communicating this respect is for the teacher (and/or other children) to learn some of the aboriginal language from the children. Very simple gestures such as this, sensitively enacted, can dramatically boost the status of the children's language and culture within the school setting and promote increased motivation to develop both English and the aboriginal language.

The same goal is achieved by involving the community actively in the life of the school. Major advances have been made in many contexts during the past two decades in the extent to which aboriginal communities have gained control over the operation of their schools. However, involvement of parents and elders in the academic life of the school is also crucial for children's ultimate success. There are many creative examples of aboriginal community involvement in the academic life of the school across North America but for the most part they have not been systematically documented and most teachers have had little professional development about how to bring about this type of involvement.

One of the major international developments that combines the processes of cultural/linguistic incorporation and community participation is the *Kohanga Reo* (literally "language nests") movement in New Zealand (see for example, Benton, 1988; Fleras, 1989). Initiated by Maori communities when it became clear (in the late 1970s) that the Maori language was not being passed to the next generation, the kohanga reo preschool programs use the Maori language exclusively from the first year of life until the start of school. Supported financially by the New Zealand government, these programs now number more than 500, and have been highly successful in developing preschool bilingualism. They have also resulted in an expansion of bilingual program offerings at the primary level to accommodate the increase of children fluent in Maori.

If language revitalization efforts are to succeed in the era of electronic media that in many cases reduce the amount and quality of linguistic interaction in the home, preschool aboriginal language immersion programs taught by elders as well as other members of the community appear not only desirable but necessary.

A central principle with respect to pedagogy is that language can develop only when it is given opportunity and encouragement for expression. As the studies by Mackay (1986) and Toohey (1985) illustrate, few teachers of aboriginal children have had training in second language teaching approaches and much of the instruction that children have received in the past has been pedagogically inappropriate (e.g. passively copying material from the blackboard, completing worksheets, etc). There is an urgent need to develop practical approaches for integrating the teaching of content areas with language development (at both elementary and secondary levels) and for involving students much more actively in the learning process. These directions are being pursued in the Canadian North (e.g. Aboriginal Languages and Bilingual Education Division, NWT Department of Education, 1989; Baffin Divisional Board of Education, 1989). The compatibility of "whole language" pedagogy with aboriginal ways of knowing is expressed by Kirkness (1988) who suggests that the whole language approach:

"legitimizes the way Native people generally perceive learning. That is, learning should be based on the real world; real language must be a part of it. Learning should not be fragmented; it should relate to living, in a wholistic and relevant way" (1988, p. 6).

The advent of new technologies opens up significant possibilities for reinforcing aboriginal students' cultural identity while at the same time promoting active use of written and oral language. A series of projects carried out by the Baffin Divisional Board of Education with the support of the Apple Canada Foundation has resulted in (a) regular publication and distribution of students' creative writing, (b) involvement of Baffin students in the Apple

Global Education network which links schools and educators from around the world in carrying out joint projects and sharing information on a variety of topics, and (c) regular visits by prominent authors to Baffin communities to work with local writers and students (McCauley, 1990). As one example of the type of project that students have engaged in, a class in Edmonton that was conducting research on Inuit requested the collaboration of Baffin students in carrying out the project. Thus, Inuit students provided information and their own experiences and opinions to students located thousands of miles away. This collaborative discovery of and validation of identity represents intercultural education in the best sense and provides a non-trivial context for active use of oral and written language.

An obvious policy implication is that as microcomputers are made available in aboriginal educational contexts, educators should ensure that they come supplied with a modem and access to a telephone line.

Finally, with respect to assessment of students' language development, the current emphasis on classroom observation and longitudinal monitoring of student progress should be maintained. There is little rationale for standardized norm-referenced assessment of intellectual ability, language development or academic achievement in view of the cultural and linguistic diversity of the Canadian North and the abuse of such measures in the past (see Common & Frost, 1988; Crago, 1989; Deyhle, 1986; Mulcahy & Marfo, 1987). In this regard, assessment is closely linked to pedagogy in that good observational data for assessment purposes can only be obtained in classrooms where students feel comfortable to express and amplify their experience through language or other media (e.g. drawing). Transmission-oriented classrooms suffer from the same biases as standardized tests in that they limit students' opportunity to manifest their true language and academic potential.

In conclusion, language development among aboriginal students is the development of power, the power to express one's self and to control, at least to some extent, the directions and life possibilities that can be pursued. The history of aboriginal education in North America (and elsewhere) is a history of disempowerment and denial of voice. During the past 20 years, however, aboriginal communities across Canada, from the Innu in Labrador to the Haida in British Columbia, have begun the process of regaining the voice that expresses their identity and their rights. This articulation of identity provides a necessary context for language development among young aboriginal students; it replaces the alienation from community and society brought about by racism and educational violence over generations, and it confers purpose and urgency on the process of gaining access both to the language of one's history and the language of action in the wider society.

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LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT OF LEP STUDENTS  
IN EARLY CHILDHOOD YEARS  
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It was my pleasure to address this conference two years ago, in September 1985, on the topic of Language Development and Academic Achievement. Near the end of that presentation I noted that although my topic was the relationship of language development factors and academic achievement, it was quite possible that social and cultural factors might be much more powerful than purely linguistic factors in influencing educational success or failure. It was my conclusion that we must ultimately also understand the interactions among personal characteristics, cultural background, societal conditions, and the educational setting if we are truly to provide all types of students with the academic skills necessary to succeed in school.

Today, I would like to like to begin where I left off on that occasion and emphasize the relationship of cultural and social factors to language development and early schooling. I will consider these factors in relation to three groups of children typically categorized as 'LEP', or Limited English Proficient: (1) those who acquire a language other than English in early childhood and learn English as a second language at school; (2) those for whom English is a native (and only) language, but who acquire a non-standard variety which differs significantly from the variety used by teachers and in written texts; and (3) those who have apparently been caught in a 'subtractive' bilingual situation, where they are exposed to both an ancestral language and English in early childhood, but seem not to have developed fluency in either language by the time they enter school. I am intentionally using the words 'apparently' and 'seem' in defining this third category, since there is a strong view held by many sociolinguists that such children do not exist, and that their definition as having limited proficiency in two languages is merely an artifact of inappropriate language assessment procedures. There is some evidence to support this argument, to be sure, but I think our experience in schools tells us such a category of LEP students may indeed be a valid one. It is this third category of LEP children, in fact, who are potentially most at risk academically.

For the children in the first category who acquire a language other than English in early childhood, that language is part of the native culture being acquired in the process of children's enculturation to their primary reference group in the home and community. Children in this category are most likely to be fairly recent immigrants to the United States. For a number of reasons, they prove to be least at risk academically in this setting, in spite of the fact that they may know no English at all on school entry. The

native language of these children is a primary medium for the transmission of other aspects of their native culture from one generation to the next, such as values, beliefs, and rules for social behavior. If the children remain in contact with their native culture, their native language proficiency will expand to include expression of the new concepts they develop, the new domains in which they function, and the new role relationships in which they participate. This intrinsic relationship of language to culture is so 'natural' as to operate at an unconscious level for most native speakers, furthered by informal means more than by formal education, and by family and peers more than by professional educators. By the time children begin their formal elementary education at the age of five or six, they have already internalized many of the basic values and beliefs of their native culture, learned the rules of behavior which are considered appropriate for their role in the community, and established the procedures for continued socialization; they have learned how to learn.

When English is learned as a second language by these children in regions where it is the language of the dominant culture, it must ultimately be able to serve many of the same functions as English does for the native speaker, including medium of instruction, and participation in expanding social domains and role-relationships. Thus, second-language speakers must be able to function at least part of the time according to the rules of the English-dominant American culture.

While the native of a culture acquires these rules quite naturally and unconsciously in the process of first culture learning, or enculturation, the process for children acquiring a second culture is acculturation, the addition of a second set of rules for behavior which may coexist beside the first, replace them, or modify them. One possible result, which has particularly negative psychological and educational consequences, is the rejection of both, or anomie.

For children in the second category who acquire only English, but a non-standard variety of the language, language and cultural development are in essentially the same relationship as for children in the first category I discussed. English is part of the native culture being acquired in early childhood; linguistic forms (such as words and sentences) are first ascribed meaning only because they are embedded in contexts of interaction, which include not merely what can be immediately perceived by a child's senses, but also include his or her interpretation of the sequence of acts that are taking place, the relationship of participants, the emotional tone, and other salient aspects of the setting. So unfolds the process not only of linguistic, but of social and cultural development.

It is important to emphasize here that the meaning of language forms and the norms for their interpretation arise from social and cultural experiences in home and community, because there is no reason to expect that children who speak the same language will necessarily have the same culture. Just as we cannot assume that a child acquiring Spanish in a barrio in San Antonio, Texas is learning the culture of

Spain, nor even the dominant culture of nearby Spanish-speaking Mexico, so we cannot assume that a child acquiring English in a village here in Alaska is learning the culture of the dominant English-speaking society and its schools. While similar linguistic forms may develop in very different settings, cultural differences entail differences in the ways those forms are used, and differences in the meanings which are based in experience.

Because children in this second category speak English, it is difficult for those of us in ESL and Bilingual Education to explain why they generally do less well academically in U.S. schools than do children in the first category who may enroll with no English at all. After all, ESL and Bilingual Education in the United States were founded -- and funded -- largely on the premise that linguistic differences as such, and particularly a lack of proficiency in English, are a primary causative factor in the low academic achievement of students in American schools who are from linguistic minority backgrounds. For this second group of children, the label 'LEP' does not apply to overall English language proficiency, since systematic observation and other modes of research have proved most of the children studied to be highly proficient in interpreting and using the variety of English spoken in their homes and communities. The 'limited' designation here reflects differences between the variety of English which they have acquired and that which is expected and required by schools. While these linguistic differences are very real, they are surely vastly less 'different' than those encountered by speakers of a foreign or a Native American language.

So why do these English-speaking children, overall, do less well in school? The data underlying this question come in part from U.S. Commission on Civil Rights reports for the states of Texas, California, New Mexico, Arizona, and Colorado, which show Hispanic students regularly outperform both Black and American Indian students (who, for the most part, are monolingual English speakers). Further, surveys conducted by state departments of education in New York, Texas, and Illinois document a similar stratification, with speakers of non-standard English -- not of other languages -- on the bottom of the heap.

I believe this stratification proves that our premise that the low academic achievement of linguistic minority students is primarily caused by lack of proficiency in English, is an overly simplistic one. While most Native American languages in the United States have been eradicated and children have been raised in monolingual English households and communities, this has done nothing for the children's school achievement. As I said at the beginning of this presentation, there is good reason to suspect that children's competence in English at the time they enroll in school does not correlate as highly with their ultimate academic success as do some other factors, and that a different language of instruction is only one dimension of the cultural discontinuity between home and school which has traditionally raised a barrier to learning for the students who concern us here. I will return to address some programmatic and instructional issues

which I believe are also involved, and which may in fact also be significant barriers.

Strong arguments have been made that the linguistic divergencies from standard English represented by children in these first two categories -- speaking a different language or speaking a non-standard variety of English -- are in fact differences, but not deficits in language development. I heartedly endorse that point of view. For the third category of children, however (those who are 'bilingual', but have apparently not developed fluency in their first or second language), we cannot so readily reject a possible deficit condition, and to do so on theoretical or philosophical grounds might deprive such children of needed remediation.

Let me first mention some data which give some indication of the nature and possible extent of such a category, as cited by Lily Wong Fillmore (1985). She reports that several studies that have examined the development of language proficiency in LEP students have shown that from a quarter to over a half of students who are identified as LEP

... are no more proficient in their first languages than they are in English. In fact, this research indicates that English rather than the first language is the predominant language form of many of these LEP students, suggesting that reliance on the first language is not responsible for the poorly developed English skills. That many limited English-speaking students appear to be English-dominant is especially troubling.

Fillmore further reports that

In Houston, Texas, to give a specific example, over a third of the district's 34,000 LEP students have been found to be predominantly English-speaking. Their linguistic deficiencies are clearly reflected in academic performance: these students reportedly score well below the 23rd percentile level in achievement tests that depend on a knowledge of English.

I want to spend more time discussing this third LEP category because understanding the circumstances under which such a deficit develops is an important requisite to prescribing remediation of any kind, or better yet, to preventing the condition from arising in the first place. In some cases, when young children have begun language acquisition in another language and then been immersed in an English-dominant environment, they lose or fail to develop their native language skills while still not developing adequate proficiency in English. In recent years, I have been conducting research on children in Illinois who have come from other countries and entered the English-dominant setting at ages ranging from 3 to 12. Language dominance tests administered to 311 children twice each year have

shown that children who first encounter English between ages 3 and 5 shift in dominance quite rapidly and become English dominant within two years -- even when parents continue speaking only the native language at home. Almost all of these children are still classifiable as LEP speakers when they reached first grade, however. Children who first encounter English at age 6 or 7 shift at a slower rate, and children who do not encounter English until age 8 or beyond shift more slowly at first and then appear to level off after the second year. Only these older children seem to be successful in maintaining a balance between their two languages. Age of entry in an English-dominant setting is thus a major factor in determining whether the experience will be one of additive or subtractive bilingualism.

To be sure, there are many studies which show young children are quite capable of developing two languages simultaneously without detriment to either, but all those I know of have been conducted in settings where both languages (and indeed, bilingualism) were valued by family and community, or where the dominant language of the environment was not as highly valued as the language of the home. In settings where English is dominant and other languages not highly valued, young children are much more likely to lose or fail to fully develop native language skills.

In order to analyze in more detail how language loss in such settings may be realized, I have begun doing longitudinal case studies of a few immigrant children, beginning within a few months of their arrival in the United States. Data include extensive observations and recordings over a period of 2 to 3 years of natural conversations with first and second language speakers, story telling and other controlled language elicitation, and classroom interaction with native language peers and with English-speaking teachers and children. Children in this study who spoke no English at all at age 3 or 4 are having great difficulty communicating with speakers of their native language by age 5 or 6, showing not only shift of dominance but absolute first language loss, and parents report that these children are already uncomfortable trying to talk with their grandparents. Yet they are still far from achieving native-like competence in English.

The children I am studying in Illinois are native speakers of such vital and viable world languages as Chinese, Spanish, Korean, Japanese, and Arabic. Parents are generally regretful of the children's incomplete native language development and loss because they believe the children will need that language in the future; often they plan return to their country of origin. Even with strong motivation for maintenance of subordinate languages in this setting, the dominant language (English) usually 'wins'.

A second cause for incomplete development of a native language in childhood arises when parents no longer see a reason to transmit it to their children. They may even view the language as a handicap to their children's education and advancement. As summarized by Dorian (1980):

Language loyalty persists so long as the economic and social circumstances are conducive to it; but if some other language proves to have greater value, a shift to that other language begins.

While there is inadequate data on the nature of preschool parent-child interaction in minority language homes to draw firm conclusions, Jim Cummins (1980) suggests that parents who have ambivalent feelings about their own language (or believe that the variety they speak is inferior), may be reluctant to use it with their children. The results may have devastating consequences. To quote Merrill Swain (1982:95):

They may not read to their child. They may not interact with the child to 'negotiate meaning'. Thus the children may arrive at school without the linguistic skills essential as the basis for the literacy demands that the school will place on them.

In a somewhat analogous situation which I consider relevant to the present discussion, many deaf children of hearing parents have also been subjected to very limited linguistic input, particularly during the years when educational and medical authorities discouraged parents from using or teaching sign language. Adults were instructed to talk to deaf children all the time, whether the children understood them or not. In these cases first language (sign) acquisition was generally delayed until children learned it from peers at school. Children of deaf parents do not suffer the same communicative deprivation, since they acquire sign language through natural interaction processes at home during early childhood. Not surprisingly, deaf children of deaf parents typically achieve higher levels of academic language competence than do those with hearing parents, including skills in reading and writing English.

For children in all three 'LEP' categories -- indeed for all children, the aspects of home and community settings which are likely to have the most direct bearing on language development are the structure of families, the patterns of language use among adults and children, the values and attitudes held about language and ways of speaking, and the network of conceptual categories which results from shared experiences. As an example of the importance of family structure, the presence of a grandparent in the home may be a primary determinant of what language young children will learn first, and how fully it will be developed. Dolores Durkin has further documented the positive correlation of the presence of a grandparent with early literacy, and later reading achievement for English speakers who are in a low socioeconomic class, and research in the Virgin Islands has documented a similar positive achievement effect of a grandparent on children in that region.

Also related to family structure and residence patterns, children in some families and communities have relatively more input from peers than they do from adults. This may also result from Day Care or other

educational facilities. It is doubtful that this retards overall linguistic development, but when children are removed from adult native language models for long periods of time, some aspects of linguistic maturation may be prematurely ossified. This has been the case for Navajo students who have attended boarding schools where only English was spoken by the staff, for instance. They reach adolescence without acquiring mature native language forms, and may always continue to speak what is sometimes referred to as 'baby Navajo'. My main point here is that when young children have very limited input from any source, communicative development may be retarded and a true deficit condition obtain, and this is likely to be only partially overcome by remedial efforts in later childhood.

One example of a true input deficit circumstance which I encountered involved young girls living in migrant labor camps in California who were restricted to the house until they entered school, both because of their responsibility to care for even younger siblings and for their own safety. They had limited ability to express themselves in either Spanish or English upon school entry (exemplifying the third category of LEP students I have been describing), whereas boys from the same families, who had been allowed to have a broader range of social contacts, were far more fluent in Spanish (and subsequently more successful in learning English as a second language).

Another social context I have encountered in which children may be deprived of adequate input for normal language development is one I have already alluded to -- where some non-English speaking families reject their native language heritage to the point of using only their very limited English in the home, or even seldom speaking to their children at all. Although not well documented, this has been reported for some Southeast Asian refugee groups in the United States who are anxious to become 'Americanized', and for some members of a generation of Native Americans that was forbidden use of their native languages in school and brainwashed into thinking that it was 'bad' to transmit the languages to their children.

It is important to emphasize that the issue of adequate input for normal language development is one of at least minimally adequate quantity of language, and has nothing to do with whether the variety of input is standard or nonstandard, or with the range of styles that is used. The parent of a deaf child who attempts to use only an oral mode of communication (which the child cannot understand) is providing inadequate linguistic input, even if the variety of speech is educated and impeccably grammatical. On the other hand, research indicates that the quality of linguistic input (judged for purposes of child language development) does not differ significantly by social class or by standard versus nonstandard usage. Claims have been made to the contrary, but a number of researchers have shown that not to be the case.

... the effects of social class on language acquisition are not to be found in the rate of development or size of the repertoire but rather in differences in the typical uses to which language is put (Bowerman 1981:1961; see also Wells 1986).

Where verbal deprivation does occur in some bilingual communities, it is the product of a complex of factors which almost invariably includes attitudes toward the subordinate and dominant languages held both by families and by the wider community. These are often related to social pressures for acculturation or assimilation, and are in some cases abetted by educational programs or practices which intentionally or unintentionally weaken the quality and quantity of native language development and of enculturation. As I said earlier, by the age of five or six children have already internalized many of the basic values and beliefs of the families into which they are born, the community to which they belong, and the environment in which they live. These include values, beliefs, and expectations about language, and about self and group identity and worth, which will have a powerful impact on subsequent learning.

In the time I have left this afternoon, I would like to briefly relate some of the points I have been making about language and cultural development in early childhood to some issues in the nature and delivery of educational programs.

First let me state the obvious, that the early childhood years are critical ones in child development. Work by Shirley Brice Heath and others is showing that when preschool linguistic and cultural experiences are different from those expected by the schools, these do not constitute a barrier as long as the school makes appropriate curricular adaptations to build on them as a positive foundation for continued learning. Some intervention programs do not recognize the validity or viability of native language and cultural development, and are intended primarily to teach the language and culture of the school at an earlier age. These may ironically have the negative effect of helping to create category three LEP children, who are fluent in neither their native language or English at school entry. In other words, programmatic efforts in early preschool intervention, intended to improve chances for school success, may actually hinder rather than enhance children's English language development and academic achievement. I reported to you two years ago that in a study I did of 107 first graders from homes in which only Navajo was used (Saville-Troike 1980), those who had participated in Head Start or Kindergarten programs on the reservation for two or three years were significantly retarded in their Navajo language development, presumably because they had spent less time interacting with Navajo-speaking adults. When we tested them at the beginning of first grade they did know some English, to be sure, while their classmates who had not had this experience knew none at all. By the end of first grade, however, the children who had not been in the preschool programs had caught up to the others in their knowledge of English, and had a clear advantage

in overall language development. Follow-up research by Irene Serna at the University of New Mexico has shown quite conclusively that Navajo children who did not develop competence in their native language are also retarded in their conceptual development by the second or third grade.

Early intervention programs which are designed largely to teach English reflect not only the pedagogical preferences of some educators, but the powerful influences of culture and politics on our schools. There is a false but powerful belief in our nation that children should 'get into English' as soon as possible or they will be retarded in learning. Because this is a matter of faith, based on profound social attitudes and convictions, evidence to the contrary has little impact.

Unfortunately, initial emphasis on developing English language skills often involves placement and instructional content which is based on students' supposed language proficiency level rather than what would be considered 'normal' curriculum content in the larger educational setting, or their level of cognitive development and prior learning in their native language. This creates a separate (and unequal) curriculum track for limited English students which is often discriminatory in effect, if not in intent. As Luis Moll (1986) has pointed out,

The problem of instructional bias and of watering down the curriculum is, of course, not limited to non-native English speaking students; it may occur in the education of speakers of non-standard English dialects or of students whose language or cultural behavior does not conform to that of the dominant society. In fact, as Anyon (1980), among others, has shown, watering down the curriculum may be viewed as part of a broader stratification of instruction across social class groups.

This instructional bias -- teaching to students's low level of English -- is found even in bilingual programs and regardless of the students's academic competence in their first language. Moll (1986) also cites evidence that more recently, this same phenomenon has become evident in computer instruction:

Poor and [limited English] students do drill and practice; affluent and English-fluent students do problem solving and programming.... Part of the problem is the overwhelming pressure to make [limited English] students fluent in English at all costs. Learning English, not learning, has become the controlling goal of instruction for these students, even if it places the children at risk academically.

And again, more than language is involved in this phenomenon. Much of the massive school failure among students from non-English

backgrounds must be attributed to attitudes -- both those educators hold toward minority students and students' perceptions of themselves and of the school.

Some of the best evidence we have of the impact of attitude on educational achievement comes from other countries. Finnish immigrants in Sweden are viewed very negatively by Swedes, for instance, and Finnish children do poorly in Swedish schools. In Australia, however, Finns are viewed in terms of a number of positive ('Scandinavian') stereotypes, and Finnish students do much better in school than do their counterparts in Sweden (Ilpola 1979). In New Zealand, Marie Clay compared the achievement of Maori children (who are monolingual speakers of English) and Samoan children (who speak Samoan at home and know little English when they enter school). When the relative reading ability of the two groups was tested after two years of school, the Samoans read better, even though the Maoris' control of oral English remained higher. She reported that the main difference between the two Polynesian groups studied is that the Samoan group feels respect and pride in its heritage while the Maoris are struggling to forget their heritage and to be mainstreamed into the dominant culture. Clay concluded,

We have learned that for a child to interact creatively and productively with education he must retain his personal integrity and be able to value what he and his family stand for (1976:339).

Relevant research has also been conducted with Spanish-speaking students in the United States. Antonio Gonzalez (1986) has shown, both in Illinois and California, for instance, that immigrant students from Mexico who attended school for two years prior to coming here had higher reading scores in English by the sixth grade than did Spanish speaking peers who began school here. In short, students with two years less instruction in English did better in English than those who had two years more instruction in the U.S. Why should this be, and why again should it be that speakers of a non-standard variety of English consistently score below students who begin school with no English at all?

The answers are not simple to find, and we should beware of simplistic unidimensional responses. Development of cognitive and academic experiential competence in the first language, which Mexican children acquire in Mexico, may have a significant effect in promoting the transfer of these skills into English and enabling them to succeed in American schools. At the same time, however, they have not faced the negative expectations in and out of school that their U.S.-educated peers have, which may have adversely affected the level and quality of their instructional experience and programmed them to reproduce the existing social structure.

Educational programs for LEP students, whether bilingual or all-English, do not exist in isolation from the schools, school systems, and communities in which they are embedded, any of which may

exert more effects on program outcomes -- for good or ill -- than many of the efforts that are expended in instruction, curriculum design, or materials development. John Ogbu has argued that the long-term effects of social and economic discrimination may negatively affect the cultural attitudes and expectations of minority communities. At the same time, research on school 'climate' and the effects of educational leadership at the school level show that these influences are not wholly deterministic, and that the attitudes and behaviors of principals can affect academic results for an entire school. Furthermore, the famous 'Pygmalion effect', in which teachers' expectations for students affect their teaching styles and student achievement, may play a powerful but unrecognized role.

Here we are in a larger realm of the effect of attitudes on instruction, learning opportunities, motivation, and cognitive demands. This returns me to where I ended my presentation to this conference two years ago. Language does not exist in a vacuum, and the fact that children are 'LEP' is relatively unimportant in determining their prognosis for academic success.

Again I conclude that we must ultimately understand the interactions among the personal characteristics and cultural background that children bring to school, as well as the societal conditions and the educational setting into which they move, if we are truly to enable students to fulfill their potential to learn. I believe it will be worth the effort.

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**EMPOWERING MINORITY STUDENTS: A FRAMEWORK FOR INTERVENTION**

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ABSTRACT  
EMPOWERING MINORITY STUDENTS: A FRAMEWORK FOR INTERVENTION

A theoretical framework is presented for analysing minority students' school failure and the relative lack of success of previous attempts at educational reform (e.g. compensatory education, bilingual education). It is suggested that policy and legislation aimed at reversing minority students' academic difficulties have failed to significantly alter the role relationships between educators and minority students and communities. Students become empowered or disabled as an immediate result of their interactions with educators in the school context. These interactions are mediated by the implicit (or explicit) role definitions that educators assume in relation to four institutional characteristics of schools. These characteristics reflect: (a) the extent to which minority students' language and culture are incorporated within the school program; (b) the extent to which minority community participation is encouraged as an integral component of children's education; (c) the extent to which the pedagogy promotes intrinsic motivation on the part of students to use language actively in order to generate their own knowledge; and finally, (d) the extent to which professionals involved in assessment become advocates for minority students as opposed to legitimizing the location of the "problem" within the student. For each of these dimensions, the role definitions of educators can be described in terms of a continuum with one end of the continuum promoting the empowerment of students while the other contributes to the disabling of students.

## EMPOWERING MINORITY STUDENTS: A FRAMEWORK FOR INTERVENTION (1)

During the past 20 years educators in the United States have implemented a series of costly reforms aimed at reversing the pattern of school failure among minority students. These have included compensatory programs at the pre-school level, myriad forms of bilingual education programs, the hiring of additional aides and remedial personnel, and the institution of safeguards against discriminatory assessment procedures. Yet the drop-out rate among Mexican-American and mainland Puerto Rican students remains between 40 and 50 percent compared to 14 percent among whites and 25 percent among blacks (Jusenius & Duarte, 1982). Similarly, almost a decade after the passage of the non-discriminatory assessment provisions of PL 94-142, we find Hispanic students in Texas overrepresented by a factor of 300% in the "learning disabilities" category (Ortiz & Yates, 1983).

I have suggested that a major reason why previous attempts at educational reform have been unsuccessful is that "the role relationships between teachers and students, between special educators and teachers, and between schools and communities have remained essentially unchanged" (Cummins 1984, p. 273). The changes that are required cannot be legislated or imposed from the outside because "they involve personal redefinitions of the way classroom teachers and special educators interact both with each other and with the children and communities they serve" (1984, p. 273). In other words, legislative and policy reforms may be necessary conditions for effective change but they are not sufficient. Implementation of change is dependent upon the extent to which educators, both collectively and individually, redefine their roles with respect to minority students and communities.

The purpose of this paper is to propose a theoretical framework for conceptualizing the nature of the personal and institutional redefinitions that are required to reverse the pattern of minority student failure. The framework incorporates a series of hypotheses regarding contributors to minority students' educational difficulties. These hypotheses, in turn, lead to predictions regarding the probable effectiveness, or otherwise, of various interventions directed at reversing minority students' school failure.

The framework assigns a central role to three inclusive sets of interactions or power relations. Thus, the classroom interactions between teachers and students take place within the broader context of relationships between schools and minority communities, which, in turn, are conditioned by the inter-group power relations in the society as a whole. An assumption of the framework is that the social organization and bureaucratic constraints within the school are a function of both "top-down" and "bottom-up" processes; in other words, they reflect not only broader policy and societal factors, but also the extent to which individual educators accept or challenge the social organization of the school in relation to minority students and communities. Thus, the analysis sketches directions for change that have implications for policy-makers at all levels of the educational hierarchy and in particular for those who interact directly with minority students and communities.

First, the policy context for educational interventions with respect to language minority students will be briefly discussed: this involves examining patterns of minority student academic failure and the theoretical assumptions, both implicit and explicit, that have guided policy. Then, the theoretical framework will be presented and empirical evidence reviewed regarding the hypothesized educator role redefinitions required to reverse school failure. Finally, the potential impact of these role redefinitions will be illustrated by means of a case study of a preschool program for low socio-economic (SES) Hispanic minority students.

## 1 THE POLICY CONTEXT

Research data from the United States, Canada, and Europe show considerable variability in the extent to which minority students experience academic failure (see Cummins 1984, and Ogbu 1978, 1983, for reviews). In the United States, for example, Hispanic (with the exception of some groups of Cuban students), Native American and black students evidence considerable academic disadvantage in comparison to most groups of Asian American (and white) students. In Canada, Franco-Ontarian students (in English language programs) have tended to perform considerably less well academically than immigrant minority groups (see Cummins 1984) while the same pattern characterizes Finnish students in Sweden (see Skutnabb-Kangas 1984).

The major issue for theory and policy is to explain the pattern of school success and failure among minority students. With respect to language minority students, recent policy changes in the United States have been based on the assumption that a major cause of students' educational difficulty is the switch between the language of the home and the language of the school. Thus, the apparently plausible assumption that students cannot learn in a language they do not understand gave rise in the late sixties and early seventies to bilingual education programs in which students' stronger language was used in addition to English as an initial medium of school instruction (see Schneider 1976).

Bilingual programs, however, have been vehemently opposed on both social and educational grounds by educators, policy-makers and media commentators (see for example, Bethell 1979). The major educational argument against bilingual education is that children who lack English skills should be exposed to as much English instruction as possible. To attempt to develop English proficiency by instructing minority students through their home language appears totally illogical to many commentators.

Thus, with respect to educational arguments, the policy debate regarding bilingual education has revolved around two intuitively-appealing assumptions. In favor of bilingual education, it is argued that children cannot learn in a language they do not understand and therefore first language (L1) instruction is necessary to counteract the negative effects of a home-school linguistic mismatch. The opposing argument holds that bilingual education is illogical in its implication that less English instruction will lead to more English achievement; it makes considerably more sense, opponents argue, to provide language minority students with maximum exposure to English.

Despite their apparent plausibility, these two conventional wisdoms (the "linguistic mismatch" and "insufficient exposure" hypotheses) are each patently inadequate: thus, the argument that minority students fail as a result of a home-school language switch is refuted by the success of many minority students whose instruction has been totally through a second language; the well-documented positive outcomes of second language "immersion" programs for majority students in Canada and elsewhere similarly refute the linguistic mismatch hypothesis (see, for example, California State Department of Education 1984). The opposing "insufficient exposure" hypothesis, however, fares no better with respect to the research evidence. In fact, the results of virtually every bilingual program that has been evaluated during the past 50 years show either no relationship or a negative relationship between amount of school exposure to the majority language and academic achievement in that language (Baker & De Kanter, 1981; Cummins 1983a, 1984; Skutnabb-Kangas 1984). For example, evaluations of immersion programs for majority students show that students perform as well in English academic skills as comparison groups despite considerably less exposure to English in school. Exactly the same result is obtained for minority students. Promotion of the minority language entails no loss in the development of English academic skills.

These results have been interpreted in terms of the "interdependence hypothesis" which proposes that to the extent that instruction in Lx is effective in developing academic proficiency in Lx, transfer of this proficiency to Ly will occur given adequate exposure and motivation to learn Ly (Cummins 1978, 1983a, 1984). The interdependence hypothesis is supported by a large body of research from bilingual program evaluations, studies of language use in the home, immigrant student language learning, correlational studies of L1-L2 relationships and experimental studies of bilingual information processing (see Cummins 1984 for a review).

It is hardly surprising that the opposing conventional wisdoms are inadequate to account for the research data since each involves only a unidimensional linguistic explanation. Consideration of the variability of minority students' academic performance under different social and educational conditions (see Ogbu 1978; Wong Fillmore 1983) indicates that multidimensional and interactive causal factors are at work. In particular, sociological and anthropological research (for example, Fishman 1976; Ogbu 1978; Paulston 1980) suggests that factors related to status and power relations between groups must be invoked as part of any comprehensive account of minority students' school failure. However, a variety of factors related to educational quality and cultural mismatch also appear to be important in mediating minority students' academic progress (see for example, Wong Fillmore, 1983). The framework outlined below attempts to integrate these hypothesized explanatory factors in such a way that the changes required to reverse minority student failure are clearly indicated.

## 2 A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The proposed theoretical framework incorporates sets of constructs that operate at three levels: (a) the societal context of inter-group power relations, (b) the context of the school as an institution that normally reflects the values and priorities of the dominant societal group in its interactions with minority communities, and (c) the context of classroom interactions between teachers and minority students which represent the immediate determinants of students' academic success or failure.

As outlined in Figure 1, the central tenet of the framework is that students from "dominated" societal groups are "empowered" or alternately, "disabled" as a direct result of their interactions with educators in the school context. These interactions are mediated by the implicit (or explicit) role definitions that educators assume in relation to four institutional characteristics of schools. These characteristics reflect

1. the extent to which minority students' language and culture are incorporated within the school program;
2. the extent to which minority community participation is encouraged as an integral component of children's education;
3. the extent to which the pedagogy promotes intrinsic motivation on the part of students to use language actively in order to generate their own knowledge;
4. and finally, the extent to which professionals involved in assessment become advocates for minority students as opposed to legitimizing the location of the "problem" within the student.

For each of these dimensions of school organization, the role definitions of educators can be described in terms of a continuum with one end of the continuum promoting the empowerment of students while the other contributes to the disabling of students.

The three levels analysed in the present framework (i.e. majority-minority societal group relations, school-minority community relations, educator-minority student relations) are clearly not the only ones that could be discussed. The choice of these levels, however, is dictated by hypotheses regarding the relative ineffectiveness of previous educational reforms and directions required to reverse minority group school failure.

INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

### 2.1 Inter-Group Power Relations

When the patterns of minority student school failure are examined within an international perspective, it becomes evident that power and status relations between minority and majority groups exert a major influence. Examples frequently given are the failure of Finnish students in Sweden (where they are a low status group) compared to their academic success in Australia where Finns are regarded as high status (see Troike 1978); similarly, Ogbu (1978) reports that low status Buraku outcasts perform poorly in Japan but as well as any other Japanese students in the United States.

In accounting for the empirical data, theorists have employed several related constructs to describe characteristics of minority groups that tend to experience school failure. Cummins (1984), for example, discusses the "bicultural ambivalence" (or lack of cultural identification) of students in relation to both the home and school cultures; similarly, Ogbu (1978) discusses the "caste" status of minorities that fail academically and attributes their failure to economic and social discrimination combined with the internalization of the inferior status attributed to them by the dominant group. Feuerstein (1979) attributes academic failure to the disruption of intergenerational transmission processes caused by the alienation of a group from its own culture. In all three conceptions, school failure tends not to characterize minority groups that are positively oriented towards their own and the dominant culture (Cummins), have not internalized the dominant group attribution of inferiority (Ogbu) and are not alienated from their own cultural values (Feuerstein).

Within the present framework, the dominant group controls the institutions and reward systems within society; the dominated group (Mullard, 1985) is regarded as inherently inferior by the dominant group and denied access to high status positions within the institutional structure of the society. As described by Ogbu (1978) and others, the dominated status of a minority group sets up conditions that predispose children to school failure even before they come to school. These conditions relate to parental access to economic and educational resources, ambivalence towards cultural transmission and primary language use in the home, and interactional styles that may not prepare students for typical teacher-student interaction patterns in school (see e.g. Heath, 1983; Wong Fillmore, 1983). Bicultural ambivalence and less effective cultural transmission among dominated groups are frequently associated with a historical pattern of colonization and subordination by the dominant group. This pattern, for example, characterizes Franco-Ontarian students in Canada, Finns in Sweden, and black, Hispanic and Native groups in the United States.

Other categories of societal group can clearly be distinguished (see for example, Ogbu & Matute-Bianchi, in press). However, detailed analyses of patterns of inter-group relations go beyond the scope of this paper. It is sufficient to note that the minority groups characterized by school failure tend overwhelmingly to be in a dominated relationship to the majority group.

## 2.2 Empowerment of Students

A central construct in the proposed theoretical framework is the notion of student empowerment. Students who are empowered by their schooling experiences develop the ability, confidence and motivation to succeed academically. They participate competently in instruction (Cummins 1983b; Tikunoff 1983) as a result of having developed a confident cultural identity as well as appropriate school-based knowledge and interactional structures. Students who are disempowered or "disabled" by their school experiences do not develop this type of cognitive/academic and social/emotional foundation. Thus, student empowerment is regarded as both a mediating construct influencing academic performance and also as an outcome variable itself. [2]

Although conceptually, cognitive/academic and social/emotional (i.e. identity-related) factors are distinct, the data suggest that they are extremely difficult to separate in the case of minority students who are "at risk" academically. For example, data from both Sweden and the United States suggest that minority students who immigrate relatively late (e.g. about 10 years of age) often appear to have better academic prospects than similar SES students born in the host country (Cummins 1984; Skutnabb-Kangas). Is this because their L1 cognitive/academic skills on arrival provide a better foundation for L2 cognitive/academic skills acquisition or, alternatively, because they have not experienced devaluation of their identity in the societal institutions (e.g. schools) of the host country, as has been the case for students born in that setting?

Similarly, the most successful bilingual programs appear to be those that spend more time through the students' L1 (see Cummins 1983a, 1984, for reviews). Is this success because of more adequate promotion of L1 cognitive/academic skills or because of the reinforcement of cultural identity provided by an intensive L1 program? By the same token, is the failure of many minority students in English-only submersion (Cohen & Swain 1976) programs a function of cognitive/academic difficulties or students' ambivalence about the value of their cultural identity?

These questions are clearly difficult to answer; however, the point to be made is that for minority students who have traditionally experienced school failure, there is sufficient overlap in the behaviour of cognitive/academic and identity factors to justify incorporating these two dimensions within the notion of "student empowerment," while recognising that under some conditions each dimension may be affected in different ways.

### 2.3 Schools and Power

A central proposition of the present paper is that minority students are disabled or disempowered in schools in very much the same way that their communities are disempowered in interactions with societal institutions. In each situation, the victims are made to feel that they have failed because of their own inferiority despite the best efforts of dominant group institutions and individuals to help them (see Skutnabb-Kangas 1984 for discussion of this point). Since equality of opportunity is a given, it is assumed that individuals are responsible for their own failure. This analysis implies that minority students will succeed educationally to the extent that the patterns of interaction in the school context reverse those that prevail in the society at large.

Four structural elements in the organization of schooling contribute to the extent to which minority students are empowered or disabled. These elements relate to incorporation of minority students' culture and language into the instructional program, inclusion of minority communities in the education of their children, pedagogical assumptions and practices operating in the classroom, and assessment of minority students.

### 2.3.1 Cultural/Linguistic Incorporation

Considerable research data suggest that for dominated minorities the extent to which students' language and culture is incorporated into the school program constitutes a significant predictor of academic success (for example, Campos & Keatinge, 1983; Cummins 1983a, Rosier & Holm, 1980). As outlined earlier, students' school success appears to reflect both the more solid cognitive/academic foundation developed through intensive L1 instruction and also the reinforcement of their cultural identity.

Included under incorporation of minority group cultural features is the adjustment of instructional patterns to take account of culturally-conditioned learning styles. The Kamehameha Early Education Program in Hawaii provides strong evidence of the importance of this type of cultural incorporation (see e.g. Au & Jordan 1981).

A relevant issue concerns the reasons why superficially plausible but patently inadequate assumptions such as the "insufficient exposure" hypothesis continue to dominate the policy debate when virtually all the evidence suggests that incorporation of minority students' language and culture into the school program will, at least, not impede academic progress. In other words, what social function do such arguments serve? Within the context of the present framework, it can be suggested that a major reason why bilingual programs are resisted so vehemently is because the incorporation of minority languages and cultures into the school program confers status and power (e.g. jobs) on the minority group. As a consequence, such programs contravene the established pattern of dominant-dominated group relations. However, within democratic societies contradictions between the rhetoric of equality and the reality of domination must be obscured. Thus, conventional wisdoms such as the insufficient exposure hypothesis become immune from critical scrutiny and incompatible evidence is either ignored or dismissed.

With respect to the incorporation of minority students' language and culture, educators' role definitions can be characterized along an "additive-subtractive" dimension. [3] Educators who see their role as adding a second language and cultural affiliation to students' repertoire are likely to empower students more than those who see their role as replacing or subtracting students' primary language and culture in the process of teaching English and assimilating students to the dominant culture. In addition to the personal and future employment advantages of proficiency in two languages, there is considerable (but not conclusive) evidence that subtle educational advantages result from continued development of both languages among bilingual students (see, for example, Hakuta and Diaz, 1985; McLaughlin, 1984).

It should be noted that an additive orientation is not dependent upon actual teaching of the minority language. In many cases this may not be possible for a variety of reasons (e.g. low concentration of particular groups of minority students). However, educators communicate to students and parents in

a variety of ways the extent to which students' language and culture is valued within the context of the school. Even within a monolingual school context, powerful messages can be communicated to students regarding the validity and advantages of language development.

### 2.3.2 Community Participation

Students from dominated communities will be empowered in the school context to the extent that the communities themselves are empowered through their interactions with the school. When educators involve minority parents as partners in their children's education, parents appear to develop a sense of efficacy that communicates itself to children with positive academic consequences.

Although lip-service is paid to community involvement through Parent Advisory Committees (PACs) in many bilingual education programs, these committees are frequently manipulated through misinformation and intimidation (see e.g. Curtis 1984). The result is that parents from dominated groups retain their powerless status and their internalized inferiority is reinforced. Children's school failure can then be attributed to the combined effects of parental illiteracy and disinterest in their children's education. In reality, most parents of minority students have high aspirations for their children (see e.g. Wong Fillmore 1983) and want to be involved in promoting their academic progress. However, they often lack the knowledge of how to help their children academically and they are excluded from participation by the school. In fact, even their interaction through L1 with their children in the home is frequently regarded by educators as contributing to academic difficulties (Cummins 1984).

Dramatic changes in children's academic progress can be realized when educators take the initiative to change this exclusionary pattern to one of collaboration. The Haringey project in Britain (Tizard, Schofield & Hewison 1982) illustrates just how powerful the effects of simple interventions can be.

In order to assess the effects of parental involvement in the teaching of reading, the researchers established a project in the London borough of Haringey whereby all children in two primary level experimental classes in two different schools read at home on a regular basis to their parents. These children's reading progress was compared with that of children in two classes in two different schools who were given extra reading instruction in small groups by an experienced and qualified teacher who worked four half days each week at each school for the two years of the intervention. Both groups were also compared with a control group that received no treatment.

All the schools were in multi-ethnic areas and thus there were many parents who did not read English or use it at home. Nevertheless, it was found that almost without exception parents welcomed the project and agreed to hear their children read as requested and to complete a record card showing what had been read.

Seven major findings are reported by the researchers:

1. It was found to be both feasible and practicable to involve nearly all parents in educational activities such as listening to their children read, even when the parents were non-literate and largely non-English speaking.
2. Children who read to their parents made significantly greater progress in reading than those who did not engage in this type of literacy sharing.
3. Most parents expressed great satisfaction at being involved in this way by the schools, and teachers reported that the children showed an increased interest in school learning and were better behaved.
4. Teachers involved in the home collaboration reported that they found the work with parents worthwhile and they continued to involve parents with subsequent classes after the experiment was concluded. Teachers of the control classes also adopted the home collaboration program after the two-year experimental period.
5. The collaboration between teachers and parents was effective for children of all initial levels of performance, including those who, at the beginning of the study, were failing to learn to read.
6. Small-group instruction in reading, given by a highly competent specialist teacher, did not produce improvements in attainment comparable in magnitude with those obtained from the collaboration with parents. In contrast to the home collaboration program, benefits of extra reading instruction were least apparent for initially low achieving children.
7. Lack of literacy or English fluency did not detract from parents' willingness to collaborate with the school in listening to their children read English books, nor did it prevent improvement in these children's reading.

The teacher role definitions associated with community participation can be characterized along a collaborative-exclusionary dimension. Teachers operating at the collaborative end of the continuum actively encourage minority parents to participate in promoting their children's academic progress both in the home and through involvement in classroom activities. A collaborative orientation may require a willingness on the part of the teacher to work closely with mother tongue teachers or aides in order to communicate effectively and in a non-condescending way with minority parents. Teachers with an exclusionary orientation, on the other hand, tend to regard teaching as their job and are likely to view collaboration with minority parents as either irrelevant or actually detrimental to children's progress.

### 2.3.3 Pedagogy

Several investigators have suggested that many so-called "learning disabilities" are pedagogically-induced in that children designated "at risk" frequently receive intensive instruction that confines them to a passive role and induces a form of "learned helplessness" (e.g. Beers & Beers, 1980; Coles 1978; Cummins 1984). Instruction that empowers students, on the other hand, will aim to liberate students from instruction in the sense of encouraging them to become active generators of their own knowledge.

Two major orientations can be distinguished with respect to pedagogy. These differ in the extent to which the teacher retains exclusive control over classroom interaction as opposed to sharing some of this control with students. The dominant instructional model in North American schools has been termed a "transmission" model (Barnes 1976; Wells 1982); this will be contrasted with a "reciprocal interaction" model of pedagogy. The transmission model incorporates essentially the same assumptions as what Freire (1970, 1973) has termed a "banking" model of education.

The basic premise of the transmission model is that the teacher's task is to impart knowledge or skills that s/he possesses to students who do not yet have these skills. This implies that the teacher initiates and controls the interaction, constantly orienting it towards the achievement of instructional objectives. For example, in first and second language programs that stress pattern repetition (e.g. DISTAR), the teacher presents the materials, models the language patterns, asks questions, and provides feedback to students about the correctness of their response. The curriculum in these types of program derives primarily from the internal structure of the language or subject matter; consequently, it frequently involves a predominant focus on surface features of language or literacy (e.g. handwriting, spelling, decoding, etc.) and emphasizes correct recall of content taught. Content is usually transmitted by means of highly structured drills and workbook exercises, although in many cases the drills are disguised in order to make them more attractive and motivating to students.

It has been argued that a transmission model of teaching contravenes central principles of language and literacy acquisition and that a model allowing for reciprocal interaction among students and teachers represents a more appropriate alternative (Cummins 1984; Wells 1982). This "reciprocal interaction" model incorporates proposals about the relation between language and learning made by a variety of investigators, most notably in the Bullock Report (1975), and by Barnes (1976), Lindfors (1981) and Wells (1982). Its applications with respect to the promotion of literacy conform closely to psycholinguistic approaches to reading (e.g. Goodman & Goodman, 1978; Holdaway, 1979; Smith, 1978) and to the recent emphasis on encouraging expressive writing from the earliest grades (e.g. Chomsky, 1981; Giacobbe, 1982; Graves, 1983; Temple, Nathan, & Burris, 1982). Students microcomputer writing networks such as the Computer Chronicles Newswire (Mehan, Miller-Souviney & Riel, 1984) represent a particularly promising application of a reciprocal interaction model of pedagogy.

A central tenet of the reciprocal interaction model is that "talking and writing are means to learning" (Bullock Report, 1975, p. 50). Its major characteristics in comparison to a transmission model are as follows:

- genuine dialogue between student and teacher in both oral and written modalities
- guidance and facilitation rather than control of student learning by the teacher
- encouragement of student-student talk in a collaborative learning context

- encouragement of meaningful language use by students rather than correctness of surface forms;
- conscious integration of language use and development with all curricular content rather than teaching language and other content as isolated subjects
- a focus on developing higher level cognitive skills rather than factual recall
- task presentation that generates intrinsic rather than extrinsic motivation

In short, pedagogical approaches that empower students encourage them to assume greater control over setting their own learning goals and to collaborate actively with each other in achieving these goals. The development of a sense of efficacy and inner-direction in the classroom is especially important for students from dominated groups whose experiences so often orient them in the opposite direction. In support of this, Wong Fillmore (1983) has reported that Hispanic students learned considerably more English in classrooms that provided opportunities for reciprocal interaction with teachers and peers. Ample opportunities for expressive writing appear to be particularly significant in promoting a sense of academic efficacy among minority students (Cummins, Aguiar, Bascunan, Fiorucci, Sanaoui & Basman, in press). As expressed by Daiute (1985):

"Children who learn early that writing is not simply an exercise gain a sense of power that gives them confidence to write - and write a lot. ... Beginning writers who are confident that they have something to say or that they can find out what they need to know can even overcome some limits of training or development. Writers who don't feel that what they say matters have an additional burden that no skills training can help them overcome" (1985, p. 5-6).

The implications for students from dominated groups are obvious. Too often the instruction they receive convinces them that what they have to say is irrelevant or wrong. The failure of this instruction is then taken as an indication that the minority student is of low ability - a verdict frequently confirmed by subsequent assessment procedures.

#### 2.3.4 Assessment

Historically, assessment has played the role of legitimizing the previous disabling of minority students. In some cases, assessment itself may play the primary role but usually its role has been to locate the "problem" within the minority student thereby screening from critical scrutiny the subtractive nature of the school program, the exclusionary orientation of teachers towards minority communities, and transmission models of teaching that inhibit students from active participation in learning.

This process is virtually inevitable when the conceptual base for the assessment process is purely psycho-educational. If the psychologist's task is to discover the causes of a minority student's academic difficulties and the only tools at her disposal are psychological tests (in either L1 or L2), then it is hardly surprising that the child's difficulties will be attributed to psychological dysfunctions. The

myth of bilingual handicaps that still influences educational policy was generated in exactly this way during the 1920's and 1930's.

Recent studies suggest that despite the appearance of change with respect to nondiscriminatory assessment, the underlying structure has remained essentially intact. Mehan, Hertweck and Meihls (in press), for example, report that psychologists continued to test children until they "found" the disability that could be invoked to "explain" the student's apparent academic difficulties. Diagnosis and placement were frequently influenced by factors totally extraneous to students' academic performance in the classroom (for example, time of year at which testing occurred). Rueda (1985) has also shown that designation of minority students as "learning disabled" as compared to "language impaired" was strongly influenced by whether a psychologist or a speech pathologist was on the placement committee. In other words, with respect to students' actual behaviour, the label was essentially arbitrary. A similar conclusion emerged from the analysis of more than 400 psychological assessments of minority students conducted by Cummins (1984). Although no diagnostic conclusions were logically possible in the majority of assessments, psychologists were most reluctant to admit this fact to teachers and parents. In short, the data suggest that the structure within which psychological assessment takes place orients the psychologist to locate the cause of the academic problem within the minority student herself.

The alternative role definition that is required to reverse the traditional "legitimizing" function of assessment can be termed an "advocacy" or "delegitimization" role (see Mullard 1984 for discussion of delegitimization strategies in anti-racist education). The psychologist's or special educator's task must be to "delegitimize" the traditional function of psychological assessment in the educational disabling of minority students; in other words, they must be prepared to become advocates for the child (Cazden 1985) in critically scrutinizing the societal and educational context within which the child has developed. This involves locating the pathology within the societal power relations between dominant and dominated groups, in the reflection of these power relations between school and communities, and in the mental and cultural disabling of minority students that takes place in classrooms. These conditions are the cause of the 300% overrepresentation of Texas Hispanic students in the "learning disabled" category rather than any intrinsic processing deficit unique to Hispanic children. [4]

Clearly, and for obvious reasons, the training of psychologists and special educators does not prepare them for this advocacy or delegitimization role. However, from the present perspective, it must be emphasized that discriminatory assessment is carried out by (well-intentioned) individuals. Rather than challenging a socio-educational system that tends to disable minority students, these individuals have accepted a role definition and an educational structure that makes discriminatory assessment virtually inevitable.

### 3 EMPOWERING MINORITY STUDENTS: THE CARPINTERIA EXAMPLE

The Carpinteria School District Spanish-only pre-school program is one of the few programs in the United States that explicitly incorporates the major elements hypothesized in previous sections to empower minority students. Spanish is the exclusive language of instruction, there is a strong community involvement component, and the program is characterized by a coherent philosophy of promoting conceptual development through meaningful linguistic interaction.

The proposal to implement an intensive Spanish-only pre-school program in the Carpinteria School District near Santa Barbara, California, derived from district findings showing that a large majority of the Spanish-speaking students entering kindergarten each year lacked adequate skills to succeed in the kindergarten program. On the School Readiness Inventory, a district-wide screening measure administered to all incoming kindergarten students, Spanish-speaking students tended to average about eight points lower than English-speaking students despite the fact that the test was administered in students' dominant language (approximately 14.5 compared to 23.0, averaged over four years from 1979 to 1982). A score of 20 or better was viewed by the district as predicting a successful kindergarten year for the child. Prior to the implementation of the experimental program, the Spanish-background children attended a bilingual preschool program (operated either by Head Start or the Community Day Care Center) in which both English and Spanish were used concurrently, but with strong emphasis on the development of English skills. According to the district kindergarten teachers, children who had attended these programs often mixed English and Spanish into a "Spanglish".

The major goal of the experimental Spanish-only preschool program was to bring Spanish-dominant children entering kindergarten up to a level of readiness for school similar to that attained by English-speaking children in the community. The project also sought to make parents of the program participants aware of their role as the child's "first teacher" and to encourage them to provide specific types of experiences for their children in the home.

The pre-school program itself involved the integration of language with a large variety of concrete and literacy-related experiences. As summarized in the evaluation report:

"the development of language skills in Spanish was foremost in the planning and attention given to every facet of the pre-school day. Language was used constantly for conversing, learning new ideas, concepts and vocabulary, thinking creatively, and problem-solving to give the children the opportunity to develop their language skills in Spanish to as high a degree as possible within the structure of the pre-school day" (Campos & Keatinge, 1983, p. 17).

Participation in the program was on a voluntary basis and students were screened only for age and Spanish-language dominance. Family characteristics of students in the experimental program were typical of other Spanish-speaking families in the community. More than 90 percent were of low

socioeconomic status, and the majority worked in agriculture and had an average educational level of about sixth grade.

The program proved to be highly successful in developing students' readiness skills as evidenced by the average score of 21.6 obtained by the 1982/83 incoming kindergarten students who had been in the program compared to the score of 23.2 obtained by English-speaking students. A score of 14.6 was obtained by Spanish-speaking students who experienced the regular bilingual pre-school program. In 1983/84 the scores of these three groups were 23.3, 23.4 and 16.0 respectively. In other words, the gap between English-background and Spanish-background children in the Spanish-only preschool had disappeared; however, a considerable gap remained for Spanish-background students for whom English was the focus of pre-school instruction.

Of special interest is the performance of the experimental program students on the English and Spanish versions of the Bilingual Syntax Measure (BSM) (Hernandez-Chavez, Burt, and Dulay, 1976), a test of oral syntactic development. Despite the fact that they experienced an exclusively Spanish pre-school program, they performed better than the other Spanish-speaking students in English (and Spanish) on entry to kindergarten in 1982 and at a similar level in 1983. On entrance to grade 1 in 1983, the gap had widened considerably, with almost five times as many of the experimental program students performing at level 5 (fluent English) compared to the other Spanish-background students (47% vs. 10%).

The evaluation report suggests that

"although project participants were exposed to less total English, they, because of their enhanced first language skill and concept knowledge were better able to comprehend the English they were exposed to. This seems to be borne out by comments made by kindergarten teachers in the District about project participants. They are making comments like, 'Project participants appear more aware of what is happening around them in the classroom'. They are able to focus on the task at hand better' and 'They demonstrate greater self-confidence in learning situations'. All of these traits would tend to enhance the language acquisition process" (Campos & Keatinge, 1983, p. 41).

Campos and Keatinge (1983) also emphasize the consequences of the pre-school program for parental participation in their children's education. They report that in kindergarten and first grade

"School officials report that ... the parents of project participants are much more aware of and involved in their child's school experience than non-participant parents of Spanish speakers. This is seen as having a positive impact on the future success of the project participants -- the greater the involvement of parents, the greater the chances of success of the child" (1983 p. 41).

The major relevance of these findings for educators and policy-makers derives from their demonstration that educational programs can succeed in preventing the academic failure experienced by many minority students. The corollary is that failure to provide this type of program constitutes

the disabling of minority students by the school system. For example, among the students who did not experience the experimental pre-school program, the typical pattern of low levels of academic readiness and limited proficiency in both languages was observed. These are the students who are likely to be referred for psychological assessment early in their school careers. This assessment will typically legitimize the inadequate educational provision by attributing students' difficulties to some vacuous category such as "learning disability". By contrast, students who experienced a pre-school program in which (a) their cultural identity was reinforced, (b) there was active collaboration with parents, and (c) meaningful use of language was integrated into every aspect of daily activities, were developing high levels of conceptual and linguistic skills in both languages.

#### 4 CONCLUSION

A theoretical framework has been proposed for analysing minority students' academic failure and for predicting the effects of educational interventions. Educational failure of minority students has been analysed as a function of the extent to which schools reflect, or alternatively, counteract the power relations that exist within the broader society. Specifically, language minority students' educational progress will be strongly influenced by the extent to which individual educators become advocates for the promotion of students' linguistic talents, actively encourage community participation in developing students' academic and cultural resources, and implement pedagogical approaches that succeed in liberating students from instructional dependence.

The educator-student interactions characteristic of the disabling end of the proposed continua reflect the typical patterns of interaction that dominated societal groups have experienced in relation to dominant groups. The intrinsic value of the group is usually denied and "objective" evidence accumulated to demonstrate the group's inferiority; this inferior status is then used as a justification for excluding the group from activities and occupations that entail societal rewards.

In a similar way, the disabling of students is frequently rationalized on the basis of students' "needs". For example, minority students "need" maximum exposure to English in both the school and home; thus, parents must be told not to interact with children in their mother tongue; similarly, minority children "need" a highly structured drill-oriented program in order to maximize time on task and compensate for their deficient preschool experiences; as a result of these deficient experiences, they are incapable of handling the active inquiry characteristic of middle-class students in "gifted" programs. Minority students also "need" a comprehensive diagnostic-prescriptive assessment in order to identify the nature of "their" problem and possible remedial interventions.

This analysis suggests a major reason for the relative lack of success of the various educational bandwagons that have characterized the North American crusade against underachievement during the past 20 years. The individual role definitions of educators and the institutional role definitions of schools have remained largely unchanged despite "new and improved" programs and policies. This is

to be expected since it is almost a truism that schools are reflections of society. Thus, in the absence of institutional role redefinitions, the educational disabling of dominated group students simply reproduces a similar relationship in the society at large.

To many educators genuinely concerned to alleviate the educational difficulties of minority students and respond to their "needs," this conclusion may appear overly bleak. However, one could argue that it is realistic (and optimistic) rather than bleak. Directions for change are clearly indicated whereas, in the past, these directions have been obscured by the overlay of costly reforms that left the underlying disabling structure essentially intact. Given the societal commitment to maintaining the dominant-dominated power relationships, it can be predicted that educational changes that threaten this structure (i.e. the only ones likely to be effective) will be fiercely resisted. This is in fact the case for each of the four structural dimensions discussed above. [5]

In order to reverse the pattern of minority group educational failure, educators and policy-makers are faced with both a personal and a political challenge. Personally, they must redefine their roles within the classroom, the community and the broader society so that these role definitions result in interactions that empower rather than disable students. Politically, they must attempt to persuade colleagues and decision-makers (e.g. school boards and the public that elects them) that the school should redefine its own institutional foundations so that rather than reflecting society by disabling minority students it begins to transform society by empowering them.

## FOOTNOTES

1. Discussions at the Symposium on "Minority Languages in Academic Research and Educational Policy" held in Sandbjerg Slot, Denmark, April 1985, contributed to the ideas in the paper and I would like to express my appreciation to the participants; also to Safder Alladina, Jan Curtis, Monica Heller, Verity Saifullah Khan and Tove Skutnabb-Kangas for comments on earlier drafts.
2. There is no contradiction in postulating student empowerment as both a mediating and an outcome variable. For example, cognitive abilities clearly have the same status in that they contribute to students' school success and can also be regarded as an outcome of schooling.
3. The terms "additive" and "subtractive" bilingualism were coined by Wallace Lambert (1975) to refer to the proficient bilingualism associated with positive cognitive outcomes, on the one hand, and the limited bilingualism often associated with negative outcomes, on the other.
4. Clearly, the presence of processing difficulties that are rooted in neurological causes is not being denied for either monolingual or bilingual children. However, in the case of children from dominated minorities, the proportion of disabilities that are neurological in origin is likely to represent only a small fraction of those that derive from educational and social conditions.
5. Although for pedagogy the resistance to sharing control with students goes beyond majority-minority group relations, the same elements are present. If the curriculum is not pre-determined and pre-sequenced and students are generating their own knowledge in a critical and creative way, then the reproduction of the societal structure cannot be guaranteed. Hence the reluctance to liberate students from instructional dependence.

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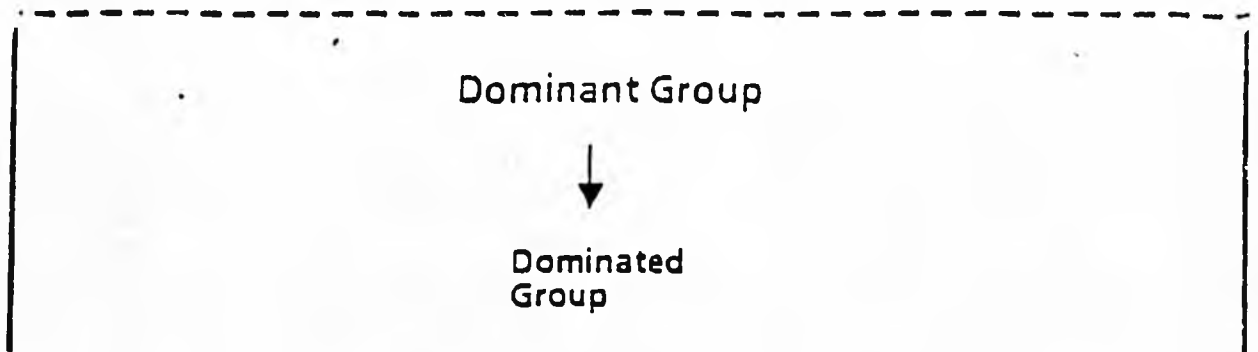
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# SOCIETAL CONTEXT



# SCHOOL CONTEXT

## Educator Role Definitions

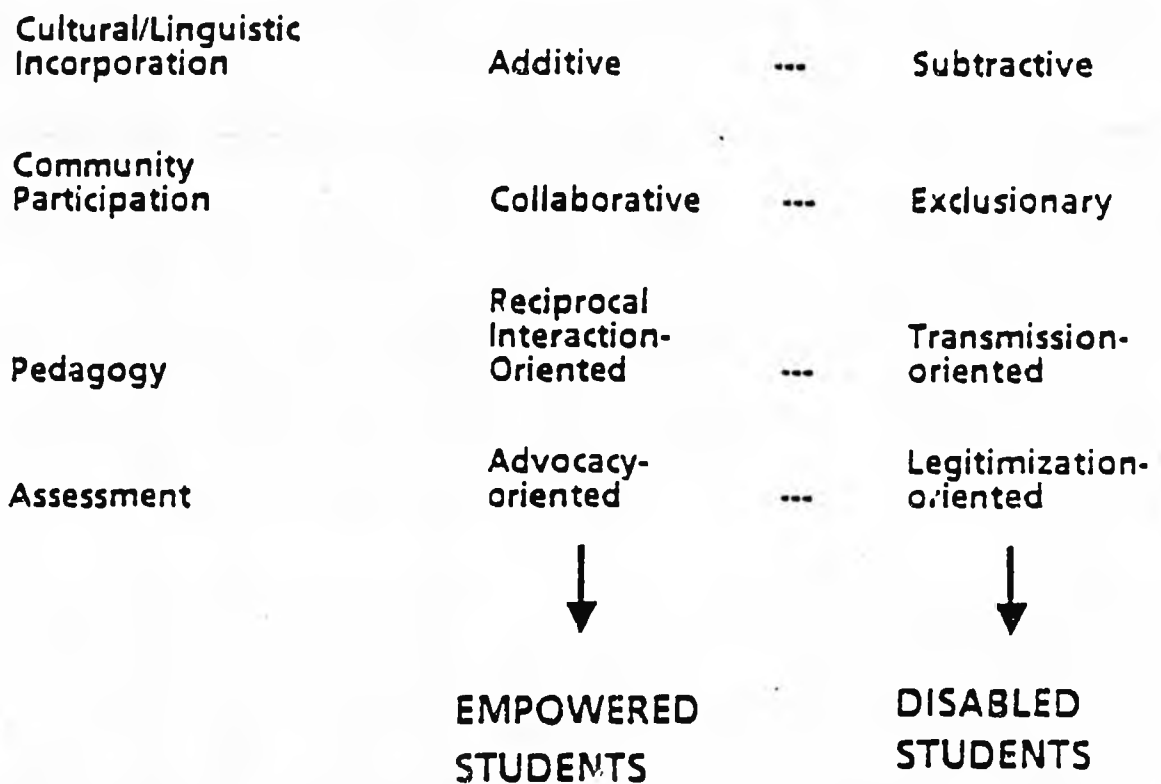


Figure 1. Empowerment of Minority Students: A Theoretical Framework

Keynote Speech, Special Services Conference  
Anchorage, Alaska  
September 23, 1985

LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT FOR ACADEMIC NEEDS:  
WHAT THE RESEARCH TELLS US ABOUT SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS


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There has been a vast amount of research in recent years on language development -- both on the acquisition of a first language by children and on the acquisition or learning of a second language by children and adults. Relatively little research, however, has related various factors in language development to the academic achievement levels of students in our schools, and to academic instructional practices. While there are still gaps in our understanding of this relationship, and a number of questions require further investigation, I believe that what is known so far is potentially of great importance for education, and especially for the education of students whose home language background is different from the language in which they are receiving instruction. It is this topic that I would like to focus on in my presentation to you this morning.

The three groups of students we will be most concerned with are: (1) those who have acquired another language at home and in their community, and are learning English as a second language at school, as is the case with many Spanish, Korean, Vietnamese, and Yup'ik speakers in Alaska, for instance; (2) those who come from bilingual homes, often Yup'ik or Inupiaq along with only limited English; and (3) those who are monolingual English speakers who come from homes and communities where a nonstandard variety of the language is used, often influenced by an ancestral language which is no longer being transmitted to children. While these groups clearly differ significantly in the nature of their "special needs" in education, we will find generalizations about language development and academic achievement which can be made for all three. Some of the research results which I will be drawing on this morning will come from my own work, both with Navajo and Spanish speaking students in the Southwestern United States and with students from primarily Asian language backgrounds in the state of Illinois, and some will come from the work of others.

First, let us consider what research suggests are the functions of language in academic contexts, and how the fulfillment of these functions may relate to differential language development.

The acquisition of knowledge requires in the first instance the receptive language skills generally associated with listening and reading. One basic skill is the ability to decode meaning, or to 'make sense' of what is being communicated. In the earliest stages of language development, meaning is in the context of interaction. Linguistic forms (such as words and sentences) are first ascribed meaning only because they are embedded in these contexts, which include not merely what can be immediately perceived by the senses, but also include the child's interpretation of, or schemata for, the




sequence of acts that are taking place with participants, the emotional tone, and setting.

With time, through further social and cognitive development, 'meaningful' communicative forms themselves, as a medium of a native language, the schemata developed in this process are available even when the language forms used by a communicative event cannot be completely understood (1981; Saville-Troike 1985a.)

In the earliest stages of second language acquisition, students do not start learning all over again in terms of what they already know. This process is heavily dependent on prior experience, the nature and level of their first language at this point.

In both first and second language acquisition, there is a continuum from only heavily context-dependent skills at the beginning to communicative skills in various situations, where meaning is increasingly derived from forms by themselves. Development within this continuum is syntagmatic and paradigmatic in nature, involving meaningful sequences within recurring events and a repertoire of forms for their expression and selection. Given the socially and contextually embedded nature of language, this process is not significantly different from other sociocognitive domains (e.g., see Slobin 1983). The well-known generalizability of skills in child development lends further weight to this view, and Kaplan (1963) call the "autonomization" of language a basic process of overall cognitive development.

While meaning in face-to-face interaction is derived from context, with limited linguistic skills because of the context in which it is situated, the attainment of reading competence requires the ability to decode and understand context-reduced tasks (especially reading) (Saville-Troike 1984 for an extended discussion of this point).



In addition to the higher level of linguistic skills required to interpret written text, however, it is important for academic success also requires such receptive skills as listening or reading for the main point, generalizing from known information, and constructing new information. Once these strategies have been developed, they are used quite readily to academic tasks in a different context. Research finding with children who began school in a new country, come to the United States after already learning a second language, that their reading achievement in the second language is much more dependent on their reading skills in their native language than it is on their relative

English. This is true even when the language they first learned to read is written in symbols which are quite different from our Roman alphabet, such as Japanese, Korean, and Arabic. Accuracy in English morphology and syntax in spoken language appears to make little difference in academic achievement, which probably accounts for the low predictive power of such language tests as the Bilingual Syntax Measure and the Northwest Syntax Screening Tests. In research in Illinois on students who speak seven different native languages, we found the correlation between their rank order of reading achievement in English and grammatical accuracy to be only .025 (Saville-Troike 1984). Similar results were reported from research in California (Ulibarri, Spencer, and Rivas 1981).

It is difficult to do research in the area of receptive competence for the same reason that it is difficult in teaching to judge the level and nature of students' receptive skills. They are not directly observable; they cannot be seen or heard. One major function of students' productive language skills in academic contexts (their speaking and writing) is to provide us with data from which we may infer their competence, and what they understand. In other words, the function of testing.

It is important to recognize the distinction between receptive and productive language skills, however. Educators often mistakenly equate production with learning, especially in the field of language. I have seen children go weeks and even months without speaking any English when they first started learning this language who quite suddenly, when they were ready, produced utterances that were at least as advanced as those produced by other children who chose to talk a lot from the beginning. In fact, in one group of students I have studied, the children who went through such a period of silent learning included those who achieved the highest levels of English proficiency within a year (Saville-Troike, McClure, and Fritz 1984; Saville-Troike 1984). Language development is heavily dependent on comprehensible input, but it does not necessarily depend on practice in speaking.

To some extent, the relationship that is perceived between performance and learning is based in culture-specific beliefs and values. Some believe in 'learning by doing', and attempt to encourage those who fail with, 'If at first you don't succeed, try, try again'. Others from a different cultural background believe in learning by observing and listening to others, and consider public performance prior to mastery overly self-assertive and even shameful.

The latter style of teaching and learning is considered much more appropriate by most Navajo people, for instance, as it is by some Alaskan groups. At a time (some 15 - 20 years ago) when the audio-lingual method for language teaching was at its zenith, including pattern practices with oral drill, two of the English programs for Navajo children were adapted to allow to initial learning without speaking. One dramatic result was that within a relatively short time, the children were much more willing to produce English than were children who were required to speak. The same principle has been

extended in at least one Navajo-controlled school, which provides space for students to work on math problems and other subjects out of sight of peers and teachers until they feel ready to 'perform' in public. Anita Pfeiffer, a Navajo professor at the University of New Mexico, says that the change has resulted not only in higher academic achievement, but in greatly improved attitudes toward school (personal communication).

Even where teaching by testing is culturally appropriate, however, teachers may be gravely misled. The most serious academic consequence is the inappropriate teaching level or procedures which often results.

One example commonly occurs in reading lessons where the teacher has students read aloud in round-robin fashion. Nonstandard pronunciation or other production 'errors' in this situation may result from encoding symbols on the page into the readers' own linguistic system. These are actually quite good positive proof of students' receptive decoding skills and comprehension. I can find no evidence that either divergent pronunciation or nonstandard forms constitute a reading problem, but the teacher can and does constitute a major problem when he or she inhibits the reading process with ill-timed 'corrections'.

This is not to say that productive skills in standard English should not be one goal of the language curriculum, but to say that that goal should not be confused with recognition of receptive skills or interfere with their development. It is, after all, the receptive skills which have the most important role in learning.

Recoding of aural input for production is also good evidence for receptive competence. Sentence repetition tests are used in some language research, and these illustrate my point. When a sentence is too long to be held in short term memory, a child can recode it only if he or she comprehends the meaning. One sentence that we asked a five year old Japanese child to repeat was :

"Yesterday Michael didn't ride the bus home."

The child repeated:

"Yesterday Michael bus didn't. Michael is didn't bus home."

While he had not yet mastered those grammatical structures for productive purposes, he proved to us that he understood the message.

Similar recoding tasks also provide evidence for receptive competence in studies of native language development. In her study of kindergarten children in Louisiana, for instance, Gloria Lanclos (1971) found that children who understood the language would recode her Parisian French sentences into Cajun French, and in tests of receptive competence in Arabic which are included in my current research, children from different countries who understand my Egyptian assistant recode his variety of the language into their own Saudi, Iraqi, or Jordanian Arabic dialects when they repeat sentences after him. What is positive evidence of receptive competence to researchers is often interpreted quite differently by teachers, however, especially when a child speaks nonstandard English.

When English readers encode print into a nonstandard and/or nonnative variety of speech when they are reading aloud, the teacher's evaluation is often realized in other negative practices, even when there is not explicit 'correction'. For instance, the teacher is much more likely to ask lower level questions of them than of standard English speakers, such as 'What' queries that require only simple recall from the immediate text, or to focus only on surface-level decoding, rather than to ask the 'How', 'Why', and 'What if' questions that stimulate higher order thinking and language production (e.g., see Gumperz and Hernandez-Chavez 1972). This is unintentional discrimination, but discrimination none the less. If a teacher responds to nonstandard language production with lowered expectations of competence, that prophecy is all too often fulfilled.

A similar relationship exists between students' different linguistic systems and their performance in writing -- perhaps especially spelling. Standard spelling does not tolerate the same diversity as spoken English, and sounds and symbols therefore do not have exactly the same correspondences in any two varieties, even when they are both merely different regional varieties of the standard language, such as those produced by educated speakers from Texas and New York or California.

Students often make spelling errors that reflect differences in pronunciation relating their productive systems. One way to correct such errors is to teach the sound-symbol relationship in terms of the actual pronunciation of the students, even if it is considered nonstandard speech. When the sounds are omitted in their own usage, as is the case with the past tense and plural endings for many, students may be taught to at least hear them when they are used by other English speakers. Since many students have little contact outside their own linguistic community, however, they may not hear enough of this pronunciation to make the suggestion feasible. In this case, it is possible to ask students to memorize numerous spelling patterns that do not have any auditory reality for them. At early levels, it is much more effective for teachers to accept spelling based on the children's pronunciation, to postpone correction until some fluency in reading and writing has been achieved, and until the children have a wider experience with the English of schools and books.

While standard spelling is an important system for students to master, early correction of linguistically different children may either lead them to the conclusion that spelling and language sounds have no necessary correlation, or inhibit the development of the fluency which is so vital if they are to become successful readers and writers by the middle grades. The overcorrected, discouraged beginner can seldom be reclaimed by remedial programs.

Another production factor which can create a mismatch between teaching and learning has only in recent years been recognized and analyzed, and that is the different prosodic or paralinguistic systems that are used in different languages, and in different varieties of English. In Navajo classrooms, for instance, I found that an Anglo teacher's normal classroom projection level was interpreted as anger

by Navajo students, and the normal Navajo time lapse between question and response was interpreted by teachers as shyness or uncertainty. Often Navajo students did not even have a chance to answer a question when they were prepared and willing to do so because the teacher gave up and called on someone else before the appropriate pause had elapsed.

Sarah Michaels (1981) and others have found that different intonation contours and discourse styles also lead white teachers to interrupt black children, and to consider their narratives disjointed or poorly organized, even though the verbal performance is often considered quite proficient by black teachers who are played audio or videotapes of the same classroom event. Some of these black children succeed in learning the white speaking style in the process of acquiring a second dialect, but the many who do not are likely to be inhibited in white schools. Recent research at the Center for the Study of Reading at the University of Illinois is showing quite convincingly that different patterns of language use may in fact have a beneficial effect on overall language development for academic purposes, but differences are still too often perceived as deficits (DeLain, Pearson, and Anderson 1985).

More widely recognized is the fact that production is often elicited from students in particular contexts within which it is either inappropriate or unlikely for their actual competence to be displayed. Educators and researchers who use ethnographic monitoring to evaluate communicative competence find that many students (especially from different language and cultural backgrounds) systematically conceal their knowledge from teachers (e.g., see Carrasco 1981). Much will be said during this conference about testing, and that is not my topic, but I must stress the importance of informed and sensitive evaluation in any case. If it is misinformed, students are at great risk. Recognition of the extent to which informal testing relies on surface-level language production is critical.

Although it is seldom listed as such, another important function of language for students in academic contexts is to convey a 'proper attitude' toward school. A list of behaviors related to school success which Cynthia Wallat (1981) has extracted from the literature includes:

- Speak positively to others.
- Make positive comments to the teacher.
- Speak positively about academic materials.
- Answer or try to answer questions.
- Initiate contacts about work assignments.

Even more indicators of 'proper attitude' that she lists involve nonverbal communicative behaviors, including:

- Sit up straight.
- Stare at the teacher.
- Use your body to show attention.
- Use your body to show persistence to tasks.
- Use your body, or face, to show self-control.
- Nod in agreement as the teacher speaks.

Testing and teacher monitoring are not the only functions of productive language use by students in the classroom to be sure. Academic competence also requires knowing how to use language as a tool in acquiring knowledge and in performing analytic processes, but these skills appear to relate more closely to language development in a general sense (much as some of the receptive skills that I have already mentioned), rather than to any particular language or variety.

This leads us to a related issue. If learning does not necessarily depend on which language or variety of language a child acquires, but only the level of that development, why is there massive school failure among students from non-English or nonstandard English backgrounds in the United States? The most obvious answer would be that the difference between the language of home and school in these cases is a barrier, that language differences in and of themselves account for the relatively low academic achievement of non-English or nonstandard English speakers in our schools. This is called the 'linguistic mismatch hypothesis'.

While it appeals to common sense, it is overly simplistic. To quote from a paper by Jim Cummins (1981):

The linguistic mismatch hypothesis implies that what is important for language minority students' academic success is (a) acquisition of "English proficiency" (usually understood as fluent surface structure in context-embedded face-to-face situations), and (b) acculturation to the values and norms of the school. In other words, because the emphasis is on initial linguistic and (sometimes) cultural mismatch, a "quick-exit" transitional program follows logically from this hypothesis. There appears to be no need to continue to promote minority students' L1 proficiency nor their cultural identity after "English-proficiency" has been acquired. (p. 40)

Cummins cites dramatic evidence from research by Chesarek (1981) on the Crow reservation in Montana and by Bhatnager (1980) with Italian immigrant children in Montreal, Canada that children who are exposed only to the majority language at home do not perform better in school than do those who use their native minority language. Chesarek, for instance, found that third grade Crow-speaking children who had only three years exposure to English surpassed children who had heard only English at home. Cummins concludes that which language is used at home is relatively unimportant for students' academic development.

A partial explanation for this fact may be derived from Wells' (1985) longitudinal study of families in England. He demonstrates that what does make a difference in children's achievement in school is the quality of their verbal interaction with adults during their preschool years.

Viewed from this perspective, encouraging minority parents to communicate in English with their children in the home (a logical course of action

to reduce mismatch) can have very detrimental consequences. If parents are not comfortable in English, the quality of their interaction with their children in English is likely to be less than in L1. Thus, the lower academic achievement of minority children who used L2 exclusively with their parents and friends in Bhatnagar's and Chesarek's studies may be partly attributable to the lower quality of communication their parents were capable of providing in their second language. (Cummins 1981:41)

Ironically, our programmatic efforts in early intervention may hinder rather than enhance children's language development for a similar reason. In a study I did of 107 first graders from homes in which only Navajo was used, those who had participated in Head Start or Kindergarten programs on the reservation for two or three years were significantly retarded in their Navajo language development, presumably because they had spent less time interacting with Navajo-speaking adults. When we tested them at the beginning of first grade they did know some English, to be sure, while their classmates who had not had this experience knew none at all. By the end of first grade, however, the children who had not been in the preschool programs had caught up to the others in their knowledge of English, and had a clear advantage in overall language development (Saville-Troike 1980). Follow-up research just being completed by Irene Serna at the University of New Mexico is showing quite conclusively that Navajo children who did not develop competence in their native language are also retarded in their conceptual development by the second or third grade (personal communication).

I would now like to address the issue of how instructional programs and practices relate to language development and academic achievement, although remarkably little research has been done to study the effects of either bilingual education or English as a Second Language (ESL). Nevertheless, enough data are at hand to enable us to formulate some preliminary findings.

First, for minority language students, the greater the use of the native language in a program, the higher the level of academic achievement as measured in English. This may be restated conversely as the greater the use of English, the lower the achievement in English will be. This finding at first seems counterintuitive, since it appears to directly contradict expectations regarding the effects of time on task. On the other hand, it is not so surprising if we assume that the less the students' language is used, the less they are likely to understand. Among the first studies to report this finding was one conducted by the U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) in 1976, which remains one of the few to make a careful quantitative analysis of language use in the classroom. My own research confirms this (Saville-Troike 1984). I have found that most of the students who achieved best in content areas, as measured by tests in English, were those who had

the most opportunity to discuss the concepts they were learning in their native language with peers or with adults.

A second important finding is that the longer that minority language students are in a bilingual program, the higher their academic achievement as measured in English is likely to be. The converse of this may seem more startling: The sooner students are exited from a bilingual program ('mainstreamed'), the lower their academic achievement is likely to be. This also deals with greater use of the native language, in this instance over a period of time. Well documented longitudinal program evaluations from Santa Fe, NM (Leyba 1978), Rock Point, AZ (Vorth and Rosier 1978), and Brownsville, TX (Gonzalez 1977) demonstrate this finding. Bilingual instruction appears to have a cumulative effect, reversing the pattern of cumulative grade retardation commonly found among language minority students (Troike 1978).

A third finding is that attendance rates, graduation rates, and college admission rates are higher for bilingually schooled students. This has been reported from New York, California, and Texas, and it may have more important implications for students' future than achievement scores on standardized tests. Unfortunately, data on these points are rarely collected or reported by evaluators or researchers.

In the case of immigrant families, the longer students are schooled in their native country before immigrating to the U.S., the higher their school achievement in the U.S. and their learning of English is likely to be. This finding is one of the most important to emerge in recent years, and is having a great deal of effect on current thinking. First reported by Skutnabb-Kangas and Toukoma (1976) on the basis of a study of Finnish immigrant children in Sweden, the finding revolutionized the prevailing thought that the younger that children begin school in the new country, the better they would do academically and in learning the second language. Skutnabb-Kangas and Toukoma found that the optimum time for immigration appeared to be about 10-12 years of age. Similar findings have been reported anecdotally about Mexican immigrants in the U.S. Southwest, and in a study at the University of Illinois, Gonzalez (1985) has found that sixth graders who immigrated to the U.S. after two years of education in Mexico did better as a group on the CTBS English reading comprehension test than all but one student who had started school in this country. This provides major support for the suggestions of Cummins and others concerning the importance of prior first language development for second language acquisition.

As a final example, the advantages of bilingual education for English speaking students has been demonstrated in a German program in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, funded by Title I. Forty percent of the students in the school are Blacks from families who are below the poverty line. Yet that school has scored second in academic achievement in the whole district, second only to a magnet school for gifted students.

If bilingual education can reverse the academic wastage of minority language students, as data from a number of language settings and geographic locations show, we must wonder what the causal factors

are. One obvious possibility is the effect of instruction given in two languages on the cognitive ability of students (e.g., see Peal and Lambert 1962; Feldman and Shen 1972; Ben-Zeev 1972; Ianco-Worrall 1972).

Wallace Lambert (1975) has pointed out that limited English proficiency students in a traditional all-English classroom typically lose proficiency in their native language, a condition he labels 'subtractive bilingualism'. The opposite condition, where an English speaker learns a foreign language such as German in school, he refers to as 'additive' bilingualism, since proficiency in the second language is added to that in the first rather than replacing it. A bilingual program may, by halting the attrition of native language skills, prevent the potential deficits of subtractive bilingualism, and permit students to develop additive bilingualism instead -- presumably the condition which enables them to benefit from some of the advantages conferred by their greater cognitive flexibility and metalinguistic awareness.

With respect to ESL instruction, the additional findings from my own research that I would like to summarize here relate primarily to priorities for teaching English:

1. Vocabulary knowledge in English is unquestionably the most important aspect of English proficiency for academic achievement. (The vocabulary that is taught, however, needs to be related as closely as possible to students' learning needs in their subject matter classes.
2. Spoken practice in English may not be necessary for the development of English proficiency for academic needs. I believe that it is a positive development that we have broadened our focus from grammatical competence to 'communicative competence'. But many who have jumped aboard this bandwagon have unfortunately misinterpreted 'communication' to apply only to social interaction. While social interaction is certainly to be encouraged, we cannot depend on that for developing academic language skills.
3. Accurate grammatical production is far less important to academic achievement in English than is vocabulary knowledge, and the portions of ESL lessons which focus on structural patterns, especially on English morphology, appear to make little contribution toward meeting students' immediate academic needs. It appears quite likely, however, that a receptive knowledge of grammatical processes which express semantic relationships is indeed important for higher level context-reduced situations.
4. Focus on students' pronunciation should be eliminated. This not only has lowest priority in terms of academic needs, it is likely to create negative affect and inhibit fluency.

The same priorities hold true for the language development of students who speak a nonstandard variety of English. Vocabulary knowledge for receptive and productive purposes is clearly most important for academic needs. The development of the more complex syntactic structures required in context-reduced situations is also

important, but this must be based on context-rich early learning at home and in early childhood education.

Focus on surface-level grammatical accuracy in production for this population, too, has little demonstrated pay off in academic achievement, and focus on pronunciation is likely to have an overall negative effect. The most interesting research is that which shows the extent to which nonstandard English speakers may also profit from bilingual education and foreign language instruction, most likely because of the heightened degree of metalinguistic awareness which it appears to yield. This is one of the most promising directions I see in this field for both research and program development.

I would like to conclude by noting that although the topic of the presentation has been the relationship of language development factors and academic achievement, it is quite possible that social and cultural factors may be much more powerful than purely linguistic factors in influencing educational success or failure. This does not contradict the findings about language, but it seriously complicates the issues. We must ultimately also understand the interactions between personal characteristics, cultural background, societal conditions, and the educational setting if we are truly to provide all types of students with the academic skills necessary to succeed in school.

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# THE ROLE OF NATIVE LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION IN BILINGUAL EDUCATION

Angela Carrasquillo, Ph.D.

A large proportion of students residing in the United States still have a native language that is other than English. Information based on the 1980 Census and immigration and Naturalization records estimated that there are 7.9 million school-age language minority children in the United States. Estimates indicate that there are between 3.5 and 5.3 million limited English proficient speaking children in the United States (Waggoner, 1986). This figure, although conservative, represents a significant group for which schools must provide equal education opportunities through bilingual education instruction. Schools have a responsibility to provide equal educational opportunities to all children and youth and to provide sound academic programs that foster advanced cognitive skills and academic achievement in the classroom. The New York State Association for Bilingual Education encourages the establishment, maintenance and expansion of quality bilingual education programs which enhance academic learning through the use of the first language while learning to function in the second language.

The Bilingual Education Act of 1968 (Title VII, an amendment to the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act) was passed as a response to the need to teach the growing number of persons residing in the United States with limited English Proficiency. This mandate allows most projects funded under the act to use the students'

native language to the extent necessary. The United States government defines bilingual Education as instruction using the native language and culture as a basis for learning subjects until English skills have been sufficiently developed. In bilingual education programs students are taught cognitive areas, first in the students' native language including development of literacy skills while learning English. Bilingual education programs help students to: (a) acquire academic concepts and learning skills, (b) acquire and develop English language skills, and (c) develop primary language skills. For students with limited English proficiency there is linguistic, academic, and cognitive benefits resulting from instruction in their native language.

Bilingual students or second language learners are more successful academically when they are first encouraged to develop concepts, vocabulary and literacy in their native language. Language development facilitates and expands intellectual growth. Background information and an extensive vocabulary facilitate learning, memory and manipulation of complex concepts. As language learners use the native language to learn, they actively construct meaning using their language background and knowledge.

The importance of native language instruction in the linguistic, cognitive and academic development of limited English proficient students has been emphasized by authorities such as Anderson (1977); Carrasquillo & Segan

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(1984); Cummins (1981, 1984); Goodman, Goodman & Flores (1979); Krashen (1981); United States General Accounting Office (1987); Secretary of Education Carvazos (1989); and Vygotsky (1962). All these authorities agree that since language is a means for representing thought as well as the vehicle for complex thinking, there is a need to use and develop the language students know best. Within these principles, there are several areas in which native language instruction impacts the most.

### Early Language Development

Educational developments that take place during the child's first year are the most important and most in need of attention. Children acquire language in a developmental stage that begins at birth and reaches virtual completion about the age of five. During these years children learn languages by using and interacting with different forms of that language. Through this interaction and without any formal teaching, children learn the basic elements of language: its sounds, intonation, basic forms of speech, use of correct and meaningful words, phrases and sentences. For all children, the key to development of cognitive skills and subsequent academic success is early development of communicative and cognitive processes. Children learn the language in communicative-based and meaningful settings. Along with the child, the parents and other care takers also contribute to the child's language development. Usually this is done in the native or primary language of the child, which in many cases is not English.

For limited-English proficient (LEP) students early native language development which capitalizes on the language experiences from home is

intrinsic to the development of cognitive skills. Through the native language children are able to acquire new concepts and skills at a normal rate, concepts and skills that supposedly will be expanded and enriched in school once children reach school age (Anderson, 1977; Carrasquillo & Segan, 1984; Vygotsky, 1962). If the native language of the students is different from the language of the school and if the school does not use the children's language in the instructional setting, there is no language enrichment or concepts development; and knowledge stops until children learn the language of the school. In contrast, if the school uses the children's native language, the children's early linguistic and cognitive development is expanded resulting in their academic success.

### Second Language Acquisition

One of the main objectives of bilingual education is the acquisition of English skills. When concepts are introduced and reinforced in the students' primary language, linguistic ability in general, is enhanced. Acquisition of a second language depends not only on exposure to the target language but on proficiency in the native language. Cummins (1984) has stated that: "The interdependence or common underlying proficiency principle implies that experience with either language can promote development of their proficiency underlying both languages, given adequate motivation and exposure to both, either in school or in the wider environment (p. 143)." A high level of language proficiency evidenced in both - the native language and the second language - leads to accelerated cognitive growth and therefore positive academic outcomes.

It has been found that children who have a good command of their native

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language (especially in vocabulary and grammatical structure) demonstrate facility in the acquisition of the second language and students may quickly develop surface language skills (in vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation) in English. Through the native language students have already mastered general concepts through cognitive and meaningful tasks (Krashen, 1981). Students use these conceptual and cognitive skills effectively in the second language environment if the second language is presented in meaningful and communicative-based settings. Competence in the second language, therefore, is a function of competence that has been developed in the native language.

### Content Area Knowledge

The primary objective of bilingual education is to facilitate students' acquisition of academic concepts, knowledge and skills through the language students know best and to reinforce this information through the second language. It is recommended that limited English proficient students enrolled in bilingual programs study content areas in their primary language since this approach facilitates students' learning of new concepts and skills.

The time it takes to reach proficiency in the second language affects the ability to master content area concepts and skills. According to Cummins (1984), it takes five to seven years to reach an age-appropriate level of context reduced proficiency (academic communicative proficiency), necessary in the development of content knowledge. Students learning content areas such as science, mathematics and social studies need to study them with the least possible language difficulty. Science, mathematics or social studies

achievement can be enhanced by instruction provided in the students' native language. This should continue for several years until students have mastered English language skills and are more adept at processing abstract cognitive skills through the second language.

### Self-Concept and Motivation to Learn

There is a positive correlation between self-concept and academic achievement. To maximize learning, students must have a positive attitude and a positive self-concept. Since the bilingual program accepts, respects and values the language and culture of the student, this approach contributes to students' positive attitudes toward themselves. Also, since pride in the native language and culture motivate students to struggle for academic excellence students will feel "more at home" in school, and will be more motivated to learn, thus creating a self-interest in coming to school and performing all the school tasks. Thus, these effective variables establish a powerful framework to successful acquisition of English and academic achievement in the school.

### Learning to Read in the Students' Native Language

Reading instruction plays an important role in the school curriculum. Through reading students learn concepts, expand language, acquire content area knowledge and become informed of what happened and what is happening in the world. The school has the responsibility to teach each child to be a competent reader since lack of reading ability can become detrimental to the students' academic and cognitive development (Carrasquillo & Segan, 1984).

In bilingual programs reading is taught in the students' native language to

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ensure initial reading success. Bilingual education capitalizes on the familiar experiences and knowledge of the child's own language. When concepts are introduced and reinforced in the student's native language linguistic ability in that language is enhanced. Growth in linguistic ability is interrelated with academic growth because language is a medium of representing thought and a vehicle for thinking. Once children have learned to read in their native language, they transfer those reading skills into English more easily because basic reading skills are transferable from one language to another. Once children have learned to read well in their native language they can use the same strategies to obtain meaning from print. These abilities provide a solid foundation for literacy skills in the second language.

### Role of Native Language in Bilingual Special Education Classrooms

Bilingual handicapped students are those who, ideally have been screened and evaluated using non-discriminatory procedures including assessment instruments in both languages and requiring the development of an educational program for each student to meet academic, social and linguistic needs. Limited English proficient students with handicapping conditions require special instruction in the language they best understand while acquiring English language skills.

Bilingual special education instruction is focused on basic academic skills to include subject area content, language development and literacy skills. The primary language is the language through which students acquire more of these conceptual and academic skills. A positive effect on literacy achievement in the primary and second languages occurs when students engage

in centered native language literacy and in the development of concepts in the content areas. Through the use of the native language the teacher becomes the facilitator of learning, focusing students learning on higher order cognitive skills and integrates language use and development in all aspects of curriculum development (Ortiz & Garcia, 1999). The native language provides the foundation for acquiring English as a second language skills. Ortiz and Garcia (1988) emphasize that a strong promotion of native language conceptual skills is more effective in providing a basis for English literacy.

### Conclusion

Bilingual education - the regular use of two languages in the instructional program - contributes to the linguistic, academic and cognitive development of students. While the particular approaches used vary widely, the term implies the use of a student's native/primary language and English as medium of instruction. An emphasis on instructing students through two languages and enabling students to become proficient in two languages is emphasized and reinforced. This endorses the value of linguistic and cultural diversity encouraging students to become literate in their native/primary language and to develop bilingual skills throughout their schooling even into their adult lives. Bilingual education programs include classes taught in both languages in a multicultural curriculum with support for reaching full-English language proficiency without negating the first language in the process. Bilingual education supports and promotes two languages for every student, especially for limited English proficient students.

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**Joint Hearing**

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on School Performance**

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for Minorities Project**

**August 26, 1988**

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**Dr. Robert R. Rath  
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# TOWARD MORE EFFECTIVE EDUCATION FOR POOR, MINORITY STUDENTS IN RURAL AREAS: WHAT THE RESEARCH SUGGESTS

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report summarizes recent research evidence regarding effective education of poor, minority students in rural areas. The report was prepared by staff at the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory with developmental support from the Laboratory's Center on National Origin, Race, and Sex Equity.

After a brief review of some significant barriers to high student performance, the bulk of the report reviews research findings about practices that can overcome these barriers and lead to high performance by poor, minority students. These research findings call for a new vision for effective education of the disadvantaged. Earlier efforts were flawed by a "remedial" and "cultural deficit" mentality with low expectations of disadvantaged students.

The research now suggests that a dramatically different vision is called for, one which is manifested by: (a) high community, family, and school expectations for all students regardless of ethnicity or socioeconomic condition, (b) active community and parent participation and partnerships, (c) skillful instruction in basic skills, learning-to-learn skills and thinking skills, (d) cultural sensitivity and relevance in curriculum materials and teaching practices, and (e) new teaching and grouping strategies such as mastery learning, cooperative learning, and peer tutoring.

The report concludes with a discussion of major public policy issues raised by this new vision. Included in this review are new issues related to: (a) the need for new policy partnerships, (b) new policy perspectives on the relationship between equity and excellence goals, (c) the nature of accountability expectations of the schools, (d) optional policy strategies to help implement new schooling strategies, (e) long- versus short-range perspectives on strategies for change, and (f) the need for continuing policy support as well as policy mandates. Finally, the report suggests that the practices emerging from the research provide a highly important information base which policy makers and practitioners should use to implement the new vision of effective education for the disadvantaged.

The underlying theme of the report is that effective education of the disadvantaged is a major public social and economic issue--not just an educational one.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Alaska's statewide concern with improving the achievement of Alaska Native students from isolated poor families is on the leading edge of a national policy issue.

As we face a future of increasing multicultural diversity and a projected growing population of disadvantaged and poor, this nation is faced with a highly complex set of educational questions. These questions go to the heart of how to improve education of the minority poor. Increasingly, we are beginning to understand that we *must* answer these questions for our social and economic survival. One researcher (Levin, 1987) points out the dimensions of the problem:

"Educationally disadvantaged pupils account for almost one third of all elementary and secondary students in the U.S. Pupils who are defined as educationally disadvantaged lack the home and community resources to fully benefit from conventional schooling practices and the recent wave of educational reforms. Because of poverty, cultural or linguistic differences, they tend to have low academic achievement and experience high secondary school dropout rates. Such students are especially concentrated among minority groups, immigrants, non-English speaking families, and economically disadvantaged populations."

We know there has historically been a gap between ethnic and language minority and majority achievement in the United States. We know equally well that one's race does not cause low achievement. We also know that chronic poverty creates frighteningly unhealthy conditions for learning--conditions which *do* cause low achievement.

As your Commissioner of Education reported in describing the results of the State's recent Educational Issues forum, the numbers of Alaska students who live in poverty and who are bilingual are increasing. Therefore, the issues of improving poor, minority, rural student performance are playing out in Alaska in advance of many other states.

It is in this context that we draw on our research knowledge today to do three things:

- Briefly review the known factors which function as barriers to high performance among poor, isolated, minority children and youth.
- Review more extensively what we know works in helping disadvantaged youngsters perform at high levels.
- Conclude with some thoughts on policy issues and options which seem to come out of the research findings.

Throughout, we will assess strategies to improve student performance in consideration of the context in which these children live and from which they come to school. Solutions that work for poor, disadvantaged children and are found not in the school alone, but in the interactions among the school, the child, and the home. Therefore, we know we need to draw upon, not ignore, the social, cultural, and economic context of home and community.

## II. BARRIERS TO HIGH STUDENT PERFORMANCE \*

We know from the research on low achieving, "at risk" students that there are features which prevent them from performing at high levels, and which can often lead to failure and dropping out of school.

### A. STUDENT FACTORS

First, we know there are *student factors*. For example, students who are not proficient in English run the risk of failure in school. Further, we know that the poor performance of non-English speaking students is not due to lower ability or lower learning skills. Yet research tells us that both limited-English-language proficiency and coming from a home environment that has a non-English language is associated with poor achievement and dropping out. Moreover, this population is increasing nationwide.

We know that when the home culture and school system expectations and values conflict, students are caught in the middle. These cultural differences may manifest themselves in ways as subtle as differing expectations of children's "speaking up" for themselves in front of adults or as profound as the contrast between the language of the home and the school. While some programs specifically address recognized language differences, unrecognized differing cultural, interactional, and behavioral expectations can lead equally directly to misapprehension of teachers and the school by the child and of the child by the school and its staff. The result is very often performance which is, correctly or incorrectly, deemed poor. The ultimate results are too often school failure and dropping out of school.

Like ethnic and linguistic differences, the culture of poverty, with its need to focus on meeting urgent immediate needs, contrasts with the long-term growth and goal orientation of the school. One researcher (Boocock, 1979) has analyzed the "culture" created by poverty and how this affects school performance:

"Characteristic of the culture of poverty are fatalism, feelings of frustration and alienation from the larger society, a present--rather than future--time orientation, resulting in an inability to plan for the future, and preference for physical over mental activities and gratifications."

We are beginning to build a sharper understanding of two different kinds of families: (a) those families who are simply poor and (b) those families who are dysfunctional (where children simply have little constructive access to their parents). The latter families lack the ability to support the educational growth of their children. Regardless of income level, dysfunctional families certainly create learning barriers. For example, children who are abused (nationally a 20 percent increase in reported cases since 1976) have a variety of learning problems. One researcher (Brassard, 1987) has discovered that maltreated youngsters are 10 to 30 IQ points below other children during early childhood. Researchers have also found that teachers tend to judge maltreated children as less competent and as greater behavioral problems.

We are coming to recognize the strong correlation which exists between parents' alcoholism and drug abuse and children's substance abuse. While we don't have research results which directly tie substance abuse to low achievement, the potential relationship seems obvious to us. As one streetwise teacher observed recently, "If the kids in our class are stoned, they sure as heck aren't learning!" The 1986 Gallup poll of public attitudes toward education reveals that, for the first time, the public viewed drug abuse as the most important problem of education.

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\*We will use the term "student performance" rather than "achievement." Student performance includes academic achievement, student attitudes, and aspirations as well as student social behaviors.

## II. BARRIERS TO HIGH STUDENT PERFORMANCE

We know that substance abuse is higher in the West than it is in any other part of the country other than the Northeast. Statistics in our Technical Assistance Center for Drug Free Schools show that Alaska students report particularly high rates of alcohol and marijuana use. Finally, we know from studies in various states that the problem is increasing in rural areas in the West.

We are learning that the growing phenomenon of single-parent families is contributing to children's learning problems. A recent research report (Milne, et al., 1986) reveals that children growing up in a single-parent family have a 93 percent chance of living in poverty at least one year while growing up. They have a 61 percent chance of being in poverty throughout the first ten years of their lives. By contrast, children in two-parent homes have only a 2 percent chance of being poor continuously during ages 0-10. Moreover, we know that more children living in single-parent families score lower on standardized tests and receive lower grades in school.

We recognize that students who have a high rate of absenteeism are also more likely to fail and drop out of school. This absenteeism may be due to a number of factors including dysfunctional families, migration, or subsistence needs for hunting and fishing. Whatever the cause of the absences, we do know that excessive absenteeism is another predictor of school failure.

Finally, we know that living and learning in social isolation causes problems. Our Rural Education Program is developing a better understanding of this isolation. Whether from dysfunctional families or simply due to geographic isolation, students who experience these conditions often lack the necessary stimulation and/or motivation to learn and to see the relevance of their school work to the "outside" world. Concern for the performance of low-income students was the highest ranked need in the recent survey conducted in rural districts in our region.

### B. SCHOOL SYSTEM FACTORS

Let us now turn our attention to *school system factors* which can set up barriers. For example, we know the problems created by high staff turnover--particularly in rural areas. Our R&D Program for Indian Education has found that schools with high turnover often lack the necessary continuity in their curriculum and instructional programs.

Schools in isolated rural settings also pose particular problems. Small size and isolation often prevent attention to unique needs--particularly among the disadvantaged. Moreover, rural teachers and administrators are prepared by institutions of higher education which may not necessarily consider the rural context in their training.

The problem of ineffective teaching of the disadvantaged has also been well researched. Studies show clear tendencies by many teachers to have different expectations for, and different behavior toward, poor and low-achieving students than for higher achievers. Teachers tend to give the higher achievers more interesting assignments. They give low achievers less time to answer questions and more "low order" drill and practice. They tend to interrupt the low achievers more and have them less self-evaluation than the higher achievers. Obviously, not all teachers behave this way, but the research has revealed some disturbing trends regarding lowered expectations for low-achieving students.

Inadequate staffing levels also present constraints to developing high performance. Studies of Chapter I programs reveal the need for frequent and ongoing adult/child interaction in the classroom. Schools with inadequate staffing levels prevent opportunities for such interactions and positive reinforcement.

Often the structure of schools can present barriers. Schools that are not structured to provide ongoing professional development for their teachers tend to perform less well than those that do. Testing programs that are not related to the curriculum provide meaningless information. Incorrect procedures for grouping and "tracking" students often prevents students from performing at optimum levels and worse, do damage to their self-esteem.

## II. BARRIERS TO HIGH STUDENT PERFORMANCE

Finally, we now accept that the lack of strong school/community partnerships inhibits high performance. We recognize, as do researchers across the nation, that the source of low achievement may rest with either the school, the family, with the broader community, or some combination thereof. To attempt to isolate the school from the broader community overlooks this need for a sense of mutual purpose and partnership. As one group of researchers (Pallas, et al., 1987) put it:

"The results of these three types of deficiencies (school, family, community) may all manifest themselves in the same way on standard measures of academic achievement, but the realization that the sources of the deficiencies may rest with the school, the family, or the community, or all three, will sensitize us as we move to identify the size and location of the educationally disadvantaged population."

We now turn our attention to guidelines which are emerging from the research about effective solutions to some of these very complex problems.

### III. STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE SOLUTIONS

#### A. THE RESEARCH BASE

Over the past 15 years, high quality research studies have dramatically improved our understanding of how to create effective education for disadvantaged students. Time and again, effective practices related to improved student performance have been revealed. As we review these research-based practices, specific qualifications about the information presented need to be made:

- Most of the research has been conducted in settings other than Alaska. Therefore, in preparing our report, we have been careful to examine and summarize those findings which appear to be most relevant to poor, minority, rural, and isolated educational settings.
- Most of the research is what the researchers call "correlational"; i.e., certain practices have been found time and again to be "correlated" to high student performance, but we are not able to draw a direct "cause and effect" relationship. For example, we know that in virtually all of the effective schooling studies, the leadership of the principal is highly important. Yet we can't say that the active leadership of the principal *per se* causes better student performance.

In spite of these qualifications, we urge consideration of the powerful guidance emerging from these studies.

#### B. A HISTORY OF DIFFERENT ASSUMPTIONS AND STRATEGIES

The issue of improving the disproportionately low achievement of poor minority students has undergone several different kinds of analyses in the history of United States education. The early view was that genetic inheritance determined the difference in minority versus majority performance. The solution strategies tried under this theory were narrow remedial approaches, such as "tracking" and ability grouping--in worst cases, even segregation. There was a pervasive low expectation of closing the gap between minority and majority performance.

Then came the theory that "environments" caused poor minority students' learning problems. These theories blamed family problems, poverty, and lack of learning stimulation in the home. The solution strategies tried under this theory focused on having the schools "compensate" for the "deficits" and "cultural deprivation" that poor, minority students faced. Solutions included many of the programs of the "Great Society" (Title I, Head Start and Follow Through, desegregation). While these programs worked well in certain settings, many of them were also hindered by an underlying wave of different--and lower--expectations. Low order remediation and basic skills instruction without attainment of "learning to learn" skills was a major strategy in many of these efforts.

Another theory came along in the early 1970s which held that students failed because the culture of the school was different from, and often in conflict with, the home culture. This theory of multicultural pluralism suggested that the best solution strategies were those that strengthened the students' awareness and understanding of their own culture and history and provided a bridge between the home and the school.

At about the same time that multicultural pluralism theories were being advanced, we began to develop a much better understanding of the effectiveness of certain teaching techniques. Mastery learning is one such technique and involves setting specific objectives, carefully measuring prerequisite skill levels, teaching to the objectives, measuring how well students accomplish the objectives, grouping and reteaching as necessary. Similarly, effective teaching practices discovered out of the teaching effects research (in which teachers held high expectations for all students, offered

### III. STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE SOLUTIONS

direct and structured instruction, etc.) also began to enrich our understanding of the kinds of teaching which makes a difference in students' performance. Most important, many of these studies were conducted in areas with high concentrations of poor, minority students.

Current research on multicultural pluralism and effective schooling practices provides us with the most promising direction. This research also definitively disproves the earlier "genetic inheritance" theories.

An additional key strand that has emerged during the current decade is the essential role of parents in the education of their children and the role of the community in the life of the school. In both urban and rural settings, the school has come to be recognized as a part of the community from which its students are drawn, not an institution that can exist separate from it. Goals, standards, and practices of the school must be consistent with, and developed in partnership with, parents and community members. From a narrow definition of community control, i.e., elected boards of education, we have evolved toward a multifaceted model of community involvement. This school-community cooperation is seen as especially critical in districts whose populations are poor, ethnic minority, and language minority children.

The research findings we will summarize document the direct correlation between these effective practices and the performance of poor, minority children. Further, the research findings paint an optimistic picture of what is truly possible. We will be talking about the "alterable variables"--those things that schools and school people can do to bring about improved performance. These practices can and do overcome the barriers of poverty over which school people have little control.

#### C. POINTS OF IMPACT FOR IMPROVED PERFORMANCE

The research on improvement of student performance suggests three key points of access when working with poor, minority, rural youth. First, in all schools, and especially in the types of communities discussed here, parent and community involvement is a key component of improvement. Second, a great deal of information about more effective ways to structure schools and school districts is available, much of which applies to the rural school setting. Third, effective strategies for working directly with students in classrooms hold great promise for improving student performance. The sections following highlight research findings in each of these three key areas.

#### D. PARENT AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

1. **Parental involvement with schooling and with children.** In a thorough review of the research, our staff has concluded that three key points stand out. First, the evidence overwhelmingly demonstrates that parental involvement in the school and with children's learning is positively related to achievement, behavior, self-concept, future expectations, attendance, and motivation of their children. Further, the greater the level of involvement, the greater the achievement and performance benefits. Finally, the earlier in a child's educational process the parental involvement begins, the more powerful the positive effects will be.

2. **Enhancing involvement.** To those who have argued that it is "impossible" to get involvement of poor or minority parents, the research suggests another look. Schools across the country are demonstrating powerful effects of involving very willing poor and minority parents. Some of the most positive examples of parentally-involved schools are in the most poverty-stricken neighborhoods of our cities and most isolated communities of our countryside. They are the result of high priority on parental involvement and respect for parents as first and co-teachers.

### III. STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE SOLUTIONS

There are many effective strategies to foster parent involvement. Among these are "Saturday schools" which children and parents attend together; home visits by school staff, a common component in effective early childhood education programs; providing transportation for parents to attend school affairs; rescheduling events and staff schedules to accommodate parents' work schedules; cooperative ventures such as parent-run child care on-site after school hours; and basic skills and other adult education programs in the schools combined with on-site child care and parent-child cooperative learning components.

**3. Participation in children's learning.** While there has been little research which ties community involvement in governance with student achievement, there is a growing body of evidence that attests to the power of involving parents in the education of their children. Effective involvement, particularly when it directly involves parents in their children's learning tasks, has a definite correlation with improving children's performance--particularly minority and poor children. For example, a major study in England found that children who read to their parents at home made significantly greater progress than students who did not follow this practice. In fact, the children who read to their parents at home (even to those parents who couldn't speak English) outperformed students who had received small group instruction from a highly qualified instructor.

These findings were particularly true for minority, bilingual, underperforming students and are concurrent with a growing number of studies in the United States. The combination of effective parent involvement with other good practices can have particularly dramatic results for limited-English-speaking students. For example, Jim Cummins (1986) reports on the preschool program in Carpinteria, California, a poor Hispanic community:

"Students who experienced a preschool program in which (a) their cultural identity was reinforced, (b) there was active collaboration with parents, and (c) meaningful use of language was integrated into every aspect of daily activities were developing high levels of conceptual and linguistic skills in both languages (English and Spanish)."

**4. Defining the mission of the schools.** Community agreement on desired schooling outcomes is essential for effective schooling to take place, as well as community participation in reviewing progress toward these desired outcomes. Native language retention or literacy programs would be a prime example of a community-driven program. Research on vocational education indicates that schools whose parents are involved in defining the vocational programs are more likely to attract and retain their students, especially poor, minority students (Weber, 1986). Such programs have as a key element parent involvement in career education and in student learning.

**5. "Empowerment" of parents and communities.** Recent reform movements have devoted much attention to the concept of "empowerment" of communities and parents. Such empowerment theories argue that the greater the involvement of the lay community in governance of schools, the greater the potential for ensuring improvement. While this theory has not been well researched, there are signals that empowerment may create a greater sense of relevance and support for schools. For example, in a study of rural schools in Alaska, Gerald McBeath and colleagues (1983) discovered that schools with greater "localized" community control had the lowest rates of absenteeism and vandalism, indicating a greater degree of community identification with the school. Equally important, community participation in defining the mission of the school can lead to greater accountability for school success on the part of the community and parents.

**6. Community members as teachers.** Recent literature on parental involvement has emphasized the role of parents and other family elders as children's first teachers. Effective early education programs, including Perry Preschool Head Start, incorporate strong parent involvement and parent education programs.

Additionally, there is evidence that parents and community members have a positive effect in the classroom, for example, when serving as teacher or language aides. In some studies of bilingual classrooms, where community members serve as the bridge between the children's first language