Do Other Countries Do Bilingual Education?

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Do other countries do bilingual education? Yes, they do. There is a vast literature describing bilingual education in other countries, and the consistent result of studies of these programs is that they work, that students acquire the national language as well or better than students without education in their first language. In the first part of this paper, I describe instances in which research has been done probing the effectiveness of education in the first language. Much of this research can be criticized: random assignment of students is usually not done, and students in comparison and experimental groups sometimes differ in variables other than the use of the first language. Nevertheless, the results are very positive and consistent:

Programs for immigrant children

Country	First language	Results
Norway	Turkish, Urdu, Vietnamese	L1 support in math, social sciences, natural science, grades 1-4; bilingual ed students better than controls in math, social/natural science in grades 4,5, perform close to native speakers of Norwegian (Ozerk, 1994).
Netherlands	Turkish	Bilingual students outperform control students in Dutch literacy in grade 2; differences not statistically significant (Verhoeven, 1991).
Netherlands (Leyden)	Turkish, Arabic	Bilingual students taught all in primary language for 1st year with Dutch as 2nd language, 50% 2nd year. At end of 3rd year, outperform controls in Dutch language, fewer behavioral problems, more social relations with Dutch students (Appel, 1988).
Netherlands (Enschede)	Turkish, Arabic	Full bilingual outperform controls ("few hours" of primary language) in Dutch reading, Turkish children approach native speaker level in reading, above norms in math 2 years after exit (Appel, 1988).

Programs for indigenous minorities

Country	First language	Results
China	Korean	Full bilingual program; more Korean speakers obtain higher education degrees than speakers of Mandarin (Lin, 1997).
Sweden	Finnish	At grade 3, students outperform controls (speakers of other languages) (Lofgren and Ouvinen-Bierstam, 1982).

Sweden	Finnish	Graduates of bilingual programs do as well as controls (includes native speakers) in school achievement, slightly more continue to higher education after grade 9 (Hagman and Lahndenpera, 1987).
Australia	Gapapuyngu	Bilinguals outperform all-English in grade 7 in math, English composition, tend to be better in English reading (Gale, McClay, Christie, and Harris, 1981).
Mexico	Tzeltal,Tzotzil	Reading taught in vernacular during preparatory year. results in better Spanish reading (Modiano, 1968).

Less convincing, but nevertheless impressive evidence is the fact that so many countries do some form of bilingual education. In the following list, I present the countries and the languages involved. All are state-supported.

Programs with intensive first language instruction have been described for children of immigrants in Bavaria (in Germany). Some children are placed in all-German programs with supplementary instruction in the home language for eight lessons per week (home language enrichment, see below) while those with less knowledge of German receive all their instruction in their home language, with German taught as a foreign language for eight periods per week, with German also used in art, music and physical education (Nist, 1978, p. 210). The goal of the latter program was "to bring the foreign child to a level of proficiency whereby he/she can choose to continue in the mother-tongue classroom or move to a German language classroom" (p. 211).

Such programs also exist in

- the Netherlands for Turkish and Moroccan children (Vallen and Stijnen, 1987),
- Sweden in Finnish, Swedish, Turkish, Serbocroatan, Greek and Arabic (Hagman and Lahdenpera, 1987), and in several countries for indigenous minorities:
- Basque in Spain (Cummins, 1993; Arzamendi and Genesee, 1997),
- Inuit in Canada (Stairs, 1988),
- Quechua and Aymara in Peru (Hornberger, 1987, 1988), and
- for speakers of minority languages in the former Soviet Union (Kreusler, 1961).

In China, "by 1995, 23 minority groups (Mongolians, Tibetans, Koreans, Uygar, and Zhuang, among others) were using their own language, or both their own language and Mandarin, to teach (Lin, 1997, p. 195).

Glenn (1997) describes a variety of programs for immigrant children in a number of countries."Bilingual reception programs" are designed for students "arriving beyond the usual school-entry age" and "make use of the home language of pupils' to ease their adjustment and speed their learning of language and other skills considered necessary before they are mainstreamed" (p. 452). Such programs exist in

- Belgium (Arabic, Turkish),
- Germany (Turkish), and
- the Netherlands (Arabic, Berber, Turkish).

In "integrated bilingual" programs "language minority and majority students learn together, with a carefully crafted emphasis on both languages" (p. 461), similar to two-way programs in the United States. Such programs exist in

- Denmark (Turkish),
- Belgium (Spanish),
- Sweden (Finnish), and
- Germany (Turkish, Greek).

Integrated bilingual programs are also available in the Netherlands for Frisian, the language spoken in Friesland, a part of the Netherlands (Vallen and Stijnen, 1987; Zondag, 1989), and Denmark provides German/Danish integrated bilingual schooling for its German-speaking minority in the Jutland area. Sondergaard and Bryam (1986) report that 22% of the students in these schools report German as their only home language. Gerth (1988) reports that in the north of France, "French and immigrants' children, from Portugal or Algeria or Morocco or Italy, are put together in the same class. They all get about six hours a week in that foreign - or native - language. All subjects can be taught in that language as far as the teachers' work is related to the official French syllabus" (p. 200).

"Home language enrichment" programs were often originally designed to help guestworkers and their families re-integrate into their original homelands but continue for those who are clearly permanent residents. These are often after-school programs, but are occasionally integrated into the school day; in France, for example, home language enrichment is provided for three hours per week as part of the school day, and in the Netherlands the law allows for for two and a half hours per week during the school day and two and a half hours after school per week. State supported home language instruction is provided in

- Australia (Italian, Dutch, Hebrew, Ukrainian, Lithuanian, Greek, Latvia, Polish, Hungarian, Vietnamese, and Turkish, among others),
- Belgium (Arabic),
- Canada (Chinese, Greek, German, Italian and Ukrainian),
- Denmark (Arabic, Turkish, Serbocroatian, Greek; according to Pavlinic-Wolf, Brcic, and Jeftic, 1988, "in the school year 1985-86, mother tongue instruction in Copenhagen was organized for the speakers of 25 non-Danish languages," p. 152),
- France (Italian, Arabic, Spanish, Serbocroatian, Turkish, Portuguese; see also Gerth, 1988, who reports that Catalan, Basque and Breton are taught in French schools in certain areas for three hours per week),
- Germany (Turkish),
- the Netherlands (Turkish, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, Arabic),
- Sweden (Spanish, Arabic), and
- the United Kingdom (Punjabi, Cantonese, Italian, Bengali).

In addition, Darnell and Hoem (1996) describe schools for Saami speaking children in Sweden, largely in Swedish but with instruction in Saami language and culture, and in Norway, using the Saami language as the language of instruction.

Another category is language revival programs, in which curriculum is taught in a language that few in the community speak. Their design is similar to Canadian French immersion programs. They exist in

- New Zealand for Maori (Shafer, 1988, Cazden, 1989, Benton, 1989),
- Canada for Ukrainian (Muller, Penner, Blowers, Jones and Mosychuk, 1977), and
- English-speaking Wales in Welsh (Thomas, 1991, Macnamara, 1967).

If one expands the definition of bilingual education even more, one could include situations such as Hong Kong, where both Cantonese and English are widely used. W while clearly a Cantonese-speaking city, 27% claimed that they knew English "quite well" in 1993, up from 5% in 1983; Bacon-Shone and Bolton, 1998). Primary education has been in Cantonese in Hong Kong, with most students attending English medium schools at higher levels; in the last two decades, both Cantonese and English have been used in higher education (texts in English, oral instruction in Cantonese or both) (Boyle, 1997, Johnston, 1998).

Similarly, one could include schools in the Catalan-speaking areas of Spain that teach in Catalan, with Spanish introduced by grade three, with content taught in Spanish for native speakers of Catalan; Catalan/Spanish bilingual programs also exist for native speakers of Spanish living in these areas, with all instruction in Catalan for the first two to five years (Artigal, 1997) as well as Basque/Spanish bilingual schools in the Basque-speaking areas of Spain, which service both native speakers of Basque and Spanish (Arzamendi and Genesee, 1997).

This survey does not include "immersion" programs, which are "bilingual" in that two languages are used for subject-matter instruction, but one is actually a foreign language. Originally done in English-speaking Canada for French, they are now in operation in several other countries, including the United States (Johnson and Swain, 1997).

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