

B. Weak Forms of Bilingual Education for Bilinguals

1. Transitional (See Baker, 2017: 206-208)

- Typical type of child: Language minority
- Language of the Classroom: Gradual transition from the minority L1 language to the majority L2
- Societal and Educational Aim: Assimilation / Subtractive
- Aim in Language Outcome: Relative monolingualism

Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) aims to shift the child from a home minority language to a dominant majority language, the result usually being cultural assimilation. The idea, therefore, is that the L1 minority language can be used to *assist* acquisition of the majority L2 language.

The analogy adopted by Baker (2017: 206) is that of “a brief, temporary swim in one pool until the child is perceived as capable of moving to the mainstream pool”. It differs, therefore, from the ‘sink or swim’ methodology adopted in submersion bilingual education when minority language speakers are ‘thrown’ immediately into the ‘deep-end’ of the mainstream pool.

Despite its final aims of achieving predominantly monolingual proficiency in the majority language by relinquishing the mother tongue, such a methodology is again underpinned by a sense of altruism and a desire to promote equal opportunities and a share of economic and social prosperity by achieving functional L1 proficiency.

The linguistic ‘diet’ offered by this model is of two kinds:

- Early exit
- Late exit

Early exit Transitional Bilingual Education means a maximum of two years of use of the mother tongue in the primary or elementary school, this being the most common form of TBE in the 1980s and 1990s.

Late-exit, however, allows approximately 40% of instruction through the medium of the mother tongue up to the end of primary schooling or 6th grade. TBE provision, however, can also be adopted higher up the education system, including high school, when individuals require transition to mainstream education at later stages of their school career. Baker (2017: 207-208) elaborates on some of the practical aspects involved in the process of providing TBE as well as on some micro-political issues and tensions which can arise occasionally within institutions.

The validity of the criticism levelled at this model by Ovando et al. (2003) is, arguably, questionable and open to debate since the only

alternative models which could be adopted to ensure assimilation with a monolingual linguistic majority seem to be either Mainstreaming / Submersion or Mainstreaming / Submersion with Withdrawal Classes. These models, however, are also criticised by Ovando et al. (2003) for what seems to be the same reason, that is, “separating language minority students from the mainstream and thus reproducing differences in power and progress for those with lower class status” (Baker, 2011: 216).

Reference to the Latecomer / Newcomer Language Centres in Wales should not be construed as adopting the strict definition of TBE as described above, that is, effecting a gradual transition from the L1 home-language to *monolingual* proficiency in L2, since the aim at such centres is for pupils to acquire functional proficiency in Welsh (L2) whilst *retaining* equal proficiency in English (L1). It is for this reason that this provision does not fit tidily into any of the acknowledged models of bilingual teaching. Pupils are withdrawn from mainstream language teaching and are provided with specialised tuition at separate centres. Certain education authorities such as Gwynedd in North Wales will keep newcomers separate from mainstream pupils for up to sixth months for intense language tuition before they are allowed to join mainstream Welsh-medium education. Other authorities, on the other hand, whilst also making use of language centres and providing separate Welsh language instruction aimed at ensuring full proficiency, make such visits intermittent with school attendance; for example, alternating two days at a Language Centre with three days in a mainstream classroom.

2. Mainstream with Foreign Language Teaching (See Baker, 2017: 208-209)

- Typical type of child : Language majority
- Language of the Classroom: Majority language with L2/ Foreign language lessons
- Societal and Educational Aim: Limited enrichment
- Aim in Language Outcome: Limited bilingualism

The educational provision where a second language is only taught as an *individual subject* in the school curriculum at various times during the school timetable (in the same way as History or Art for example) has been labelled by some as ‘drip-feed’ language teaching. Obviously adopted from a medical context, the term is nevertheless a misnomer due to its sporadic delivery and the student’s lack of constant contact with the language.

Despite the adoption of various approaches *within* the same basic model (e.g. the direct method, the bilingual method), it is generally acknowledged as being ineffective in promoting bilingual proficiency.

However, this is the method of teaching an additional language commonly adopted in schools in the United Kingdom, whether it is French, Spanish, German, Italian or Welsh. In Wales, the model has been heavily criticised by academics and by the school inspectorate (Estyn) as being methodologically weak and not cost-effective. Nevertheless, it is a methodology which continues to be adopted. Finding that pupils from an English-language background in Canada were unable to communicate effectively with French Canadians after twelve years of ‘drip-feed’ language teaching, Le Blanc (1992: 35) made the following observation:

We all know how much our country invests in second language training. We are talking in terms of millions and millions of dollars...All these students are taking second-language courses and, once they have finished, should normally be able to function in the second language. But what happens in reality? (cited in Baker, 1993: 157)

With a view to bringing the ineffectiveness of this model as a teaching *methodology* to the attention of politicians responsible for formulating language policies in Wales, Lewis (2013) believes that questioning its *cost-effectiveness* may effect a political response more readily than emphasising its inherent *methodological* weakness.

Baker (2011) provides statistics from a survey which is conducted by the Center of Applied Linguistics (CAL) in the USA every decade. Despite already being very low percentages, the figures showed a decrease in the number of elementary schools teaching languages between 1997 and 2009 (from 31% to 25%) despite an increase in the previous decade. Of those actually teaching a foreign language in 2009 however, 88% were teaching Spanish, an increase of 9% on the previous survey. As pointed out, this “provides a paradox if not an internal conflict” and reflects Garcia’s (2008) reference to a developing interaction between Spanish as a globalised language and as the minority language of USA Latinos with Spanish being taught as a heritage language, a foreign language as well as in Dual Language bilingual programmes (see below). Whereas this conflict is reflected in the decision of California and Arizona not to allow the use of Spanish in their education systems in the wake of Proposition 227 and Proposition 203 respectively, it also points to a far more fundamental *ambivalence* in attitude towards foreign languages; whether to treat them as a *problem* in accordance with what is perceived as the cause of social and national disunity, or as an economic and social *resource* (Ruiz, 1984).

The marked decrease in foreign language teaching in middle schools in the USA (from 75% to 58% within a decade according to the CAL 2009 survey) also seems to mark an indifference to bilingual or multilingual proficiency. Although remaining at a high percentage of 91% in *high schools* between decades, the acknowledged ineffectiveness and inefficiency of this methodology in terms of producing proficient speakers again points in the same direction, indicating nothing more than a tokenism to the development of bilingual skills.

However, as Baker (2017: 209) points out, one cannot argue that such proficiency is unattainable by this methodology since evidence relating to the learning of English, for example, in other parts of the world, including Europe, proves otherwise. Instrumental and integrational factors as propounded by Gardener & Lambert (1972) as well as Maslow's (1954) "hierarchy of human needs" (see module ECDA-7011) can often provide the required level of motivation to achieve success. As a developing and dominant global *lingua franca*, macro economic and social forces can provide the necessary motivation for people to acquire a proficient level of English, whereas in countries where English is already a dominant language, such inherent proficiency causes any motivation (or need) to acquire another language to diminish.

3. Separatist (See Baker, 2017: 209)

- Typical type of child: Language minority
- Language of the Classroom: Minority language by choice
- Societal and Educational Aim: Detachment / Autonomy
- Aim in Language Outcome: Limited bilingualism

This form of education in relation to a 'bilingual' content is extremely rare and aims at protecting a minority language community from a possible shift to a majority language. Whereas this can be for *political* reasons when and where possible, it can, however, have cultural or religious aims. It therefore resists both *economic-structural* and *cultural* integration (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1977) and any form of linguistic assimilation. Such education could also be said to reflect a 'preservationist' approach to securing language vitality (Williams, 1991), (see module ECDA-7011). Unlike the Segregationist model, the Separatist model is adopted deliberately and *by choice*. An often-mentioned example is the language adopted by the Amish community in Pennsylvania. Having emigrated from Germany to the USA in the eighteenth century, the original settlers continued to use a German dialect related to that spoken along the Rhine. As an isolated community which has retained its own unique way of life and religious practices over the years, present members continue to speak Pennsylvania German.

Although presently under threat of survival in a community where English is becoming increasingly more pervasive, it is an example of where a separate, self-imposed, isolated existence and its attendant religious practices have historically succeeded in protecting a minority language within a wider, dominant linguistic context.