

“English for the Children”: The New Literacy of the Old World Order, Language Policy and Educational Reform

Kris D. Gutiérrez
University of California, Los Angeles

Patricia Baquedano-López
University of California, Berkeley

Jolynn Asato
University of California, Los Angeles

Abstract

Proposition 227 is perhaps the single most important language policy decision of this last century—one that may have profound consequences on schooling in the 21st century. Documenting the ways school districts, the local schools, teachers, and parents make sense of this new policy is central to understanding its short- and long-term effects on the education of English language learners (ELLs). Using qualitative approaches to inquiry, we have studied how three different school districts in Southern California interpreted and implemented the new law. A second concurrent strand of research examined how teachers interpreted and implemented the new law in classroom practice. Three case study classrooms were observed across the first academic year implementing Proposition 227: (a) one English immersion classroom, (b) one alternative bilingual classroom, and (c) one structured immersion classroom. Participant observation and interview methods were used to capture the evolution of classroom practices, literacy practices in particular.

Introduction

Since the passage of Proposition 227, children in many California schools have significantly fewer opportunities to receive instructional support in their home language or to use their primary language in the service of learning. This decrease is evident even in schools and classrooms that overtly supported the use of the primary language in learning and instruction. Indeed, we have observed a dramatic shift in teaching and learning practices across all three models of literacy and language instruction available under 227.¹ There are several explanations. At the policy level, the convergence of numerous and simultaneous reform efforts (e.g., class size reduction, the new state standardized assessment, new reading and accountability initiatives and programs, the new Language Arts Standards) has pressured teachers in

structured and alternative bilingual model programs to default to English language instruction or instructional support.

This rapid shift in language practices has been accelerated in particular by dramatic shifts in the state's reading program. Most notably, we have documented the implementation of a much more reductive notion of literacy in which language and literacy are rarely employed as tools for learning; instead, English language learning (in particular oral language fluency) has become the primary target of instruction (Gutiérrez, Asato, Santos, & Gotanda, in press).

Consider the following description of a second-grade classroom captured in the field notes of one of our research team members. The following lesson took place during a typical reading activity in one classroom in which the teacher introduced consonant digraphs and then elicited examples of words with consonant digraphs. According to the teacher, the goal of this lesson was to identify commonly used digraphs and the sounds associated with the particular digraphs. The articulated goal in the reading program is to teach digraphs to help students recognize sound letter relationships and, patterns for spelling.

T: We're going to try another digraph, C-H. What does C-H say?

S1: Ch

S2: Chin

S3: Much

S4: Chop

S5: Such

T: (Writes the words on the board and underlines the "ch" in every word.)

SS: I see a pattern.

S6: I see a pattern. Front, back, front, back.

T: (Pauses and frowns at the board) Yes. How about ch? (She emphasizes the "ch" sound.)

S7: The devil. The devil. In Spanish.

SS: Chamuco.

T: (Frowns and doesn't write the word on the board.) Let's do English first.

S8: Chart

S9: Chop

T: (Points to the word chop on the board.) We already have chop.

S9: (shakes her head) No, chop.

T: You mean chop? Like I chop onions? (Makes a chopping motion with her hand.)

S9: (shakes her head) No, when you work.

T: Oh shhhhopping. No, shop and chop are different. Shop is where you go shhhhopping. That's shhhh. (Points to the other chart where shop is listed.)

S9: (Looks down at the carpet.)

JA, Field Notes, 1988, November 17.

While this phonics lesson was designed to elicit lively student participation, many of the ways in which students, particularly Spanish-speaking students, heard and understood phonemic units were not taken up, or elaborated on by the teacher.² Although the teacher is a fluent Spanish speaker and knows well the connections students were trying to make phonetically, she did not capitalize upon the students' rich knowledge of Spanish phonics and linguistic resources in order to help students make sense of English digraphs. Moreover, she did not draw on the cultural knowledge (e.g., *chamuco*) to build their understandings of the concept being taught. Language and literacy here are reduced to learning English language sounds, out of the context of a more substantive literacy goal, or even more thorough understanding of digraphs.

Classrooms such as Ms. Alvarez's are instructive case studies of the ways in which anti-immigrant and educational reform policies have come together to prop up the large-scale implementation of new language and literacy practices in the state of California. As Varenne and McDermott (1999) expose in their recent book *Successful Failure: The School America Builds*, American schools are driven by a preoccupation with identifying children in terms of the categories that schools have constructed for them. Indeed, the hierarchization of students by ability and skills is tied to a system that rewards and punishes (Foucault, 1977), and structures success and failure. In this case, English language fluency becomes the key criterion in determining academic success. As Varenne and McDermott (1999) compellingly write:

It is easy to identify and criticize the American school preoccupation with failure, for the evidence is abundant that too many people leave school scarred. The more difficult task is to come to a point where one can think about education and schooling without thinking about failure or success as categories for the identification of children. (p. xi)

This language of success and failure is most evident in the history of the educational and social reform agenda, and particularly in the "New Literacy"³ of the state of California. Couched in the rhetoric of progress, accountability, and higher standards, the reforms are ostensibly about the achievement or underachievement of ethnically and culturally diverse students, particularly Latino, and all the reforms are aimed toward "fixing" Latino and other language minority students. Sustained by a nostalgia for the golden age of entitlement

and privilege that existed for some before the incremental changes of the civil rights movement and rapidly changing state demographics, the discourse of reform in California has become a reactionary response to diversity and difference (Gutiérrez, Asato, Santos, & Gotanda, in press). Thus, despite the legal and political rhetorical maneuvering, educational reform in California is fundamentally about normalizing large numbers of linguistically and culturally diverse children and the social and cultural practices in which they engage; it is also about normalizing their educational practices and the educators who must implement them (Gutiérrez, Baquedano-López, & Alvarez, 2000; Gutiérrez et al., in press).

Using ethnographic and interview data from a year-long and ongoing study of *The Effects of Proposition 227 on the Teaching and Learning of Literacy*,⁴ we will demonstrate how new reforms institutionalize practices that help ensure failure for an extremely vulnerable population: the English language learner. We argue that the underachievement and academic failure of Latino children is becoming the accepted norm. To this end, we will illustrate how Proposition 227 (a recent language policy) becomes the vehicle for socializing large numbers of people toward a new (or renewed) language ideology, namely English Only, as well as the rationale for sorting children into categories and curricular programs that ensure success for some and failure for many English language learners. Finally, we will demonstrate how Proposition 227 functions as the pivot between an English-only ideology and California's new literacy reading reform.

The Socio-Political Context

Given the state of California's history toward immigrant children in schools, a shortage of adequately prepared teachers, and the continued inequitable distribution of material, capital, and human resources, the conditions for the predictable failure of vulnerable student populations are in place. Moreover, consider the current struggles in our state where the incremental gains of the civil rights movement have been lost. In the past decade, voters in California have proposed the elimination of health and educational services for undocumented immigrants (Proposition 187)⁵ and overturned affirmative action programs (Proposition 209). At the same time, University Regents limited access for historically marginalized student populations by eliminating race as one criterion for admission to the University of California, the premier system of higher education in the state (SP1). The anti-immigrant and anti-affirmative action sentiments of propositions 187, 209, and SP1 were reinforced further by Proposition 227, a measure that essentially eliminated bilingual education by restricting the use of the primary language in instructional contexts and mandating English immersion instruction for all English language learners.

In this particular context, the operant backlash politics are largely a reactionary response to the dramatic shift in the demographics of California and in its public schools. The extraordinary numbers of English language learners, predominantly Latino, have created a new educational challenge

that has been met with resistance from educators, politicians, and the general populace. The collective response this time, however, has become more exclusionary, and more overtly racialized. This primarily anti-Latino immigrant reform package effectively employed a language of reform that both devalued the Spanish language (and other home languages), its utility, and thus, its community. Language use, then, has become the centerpiece of the educational reform agenda, and has had particular consequences for linguistic minorities (Gutiérrez et al., in press).⁶ In light of the national push toward educational reform and the changing demographics across the nation and especially California, the study of Proposition 227, then, should be of critical interest to educational researchers, practitioners, and policy makers in general.

The Study

For the past year, we have been examining the effects of Proposition 227 on literacy instruction for English language learners. The primary goal of this research was to document stakeholders' understanding of the proposition, its effects, its implementation, and its immediate and long-term consequences on the teaching and learning of literacy and, thus, student learning. To understand more fully how this language policy has influenced the teaching and learning of literacy, it was necessary to understand how school districts, schools, teachers, and parents interpreted and implemented the new law. Examining the ways school districts, local schools, teachers, and parents make sense of this new policy is central to understanding its immediate and long-term effects on the education of English language learners.

Using qualitative approaches to inquiry, we studied how three different school districts interpreted and implemented Proposition 227 (see Appendix A).⁷ It is common in our research to videotape the social practices of teachers and students throughout the school year. However, because of the highly political nature of this measure and the vulnerability of teachers and children, we decided against using our standard methodology and did not videotape instruction. (And in some cases we were prohibited.) Instead, we audio recorded and transcribed all interviews and collected extensive field notes of classroom instruction, school meetings, and parent/school meetings during the first month of school prior to the implementation of the new law and throughout the school year thereafter.

One strand of research was designed to assess more broadly the effects of Proposition 227 across three urban school districts. Specifically, we interviewed district and school administrators, former bilingual coordinators, classroom teachers and, when possible, parents to understand how they were making sense of the new language policy (see Appendix B for a sample interview protocol). We report here the findings of the first year and a half after the passing of the proposition.

A second concurrent strand of research examined the implementation of teachers' interpretations of Proposition 227 in classroom practice. Participant

observation and interview methods were used to capture the evolution of classroom practices, literacy practices in particular, in three case study classrooms: (a) one English-only classroom, (b) one alternative bilingual classroom, and (c) one structured immersion classroom. By observing instruction in three focal classrooms across the year (pre-and post-227), we were able to document the very specific ways teachers and children were affected by the abrupt change in language policy.

Findings

Our findings confirm the tremendous variance in the interpretation and implementation of Proposition 227 across school districts (see Appendix C for a summary of major findings thus far). The analysis of interview data from key participants across all three districts and our field notes of teacher meetings, parent information meetings, teacher in-services, and classroom observations identified dramatic differences in the roles teachers and parents were allowed to play as districts made sense of the new law. For example, two of three case study school districts (Districts 2 and 3) mandated options to parents and teachers, while a third school district (District 1) tried to actively include their constituents in the interpretation and planning process. In particular, there were significant differences in both the quality and content of the information provided to teachers, and similarly, to parents about placement options for their children.

In the best case, a school in District 1, where the student population is 95% Latino and Spanish speaking held informational meetings in both Spanish and English for parents. In contrast to schools in the other districts we studied, there was nearly 100% parent attendance in these meetings, as the meetings were scheduled in the regular cohorts (school track) at times (evenings) parents met throughout the year. At this school, parents were given the opportunity to make sense of the law in large-group question and answer sessions, and then in small group sessions with individual teachers. Information about each program option was presented bilingually in Spanish and in English, both orally and in written form. In this same school, over a third of the parents selected the alternative bilingual program for their young children (K-3) and most often selected structured models for their older children (4-5). Specifically, 60% of the parents chose an alternative bilingual program for their children; 34% chose the structured English immersion program, and 6% placed their children in English mainstream classes. Overall, parents' placement choice was influenced by the age of their children, the quality of the parent information sessions, the districts' belief about the value of the home language in the learning process, and the districts' commitment to offering the full range of instructional models.

We documented variance in the interpretation and implementation of the law even within this pro-bilingual district and the important role that the

school's administration played in offering parents the full range of options. Compare, for example, the percentage of English language learners placed in bilingual classes at the case study school (a school that engaged the entire community, including administrators, parents, and teachers) with other schools in the same district. Whereas in the case study school 60% of the ELL students were placed in an alternative bilingual program, the percentage for the district as a whole was 35%. The overall district percentage of English language learners was 52% in structured English, 35% in alternative bilingual, and 13% in English mainstream.

In the other districts (2 and 3) where options were mandated from the administration to the schools, teachers, and parents, predictably the programmatic breakdowns looked very different. In District 2, 68% were placed in structured English immersion programs, 5% in alternative bilingual programs, and 27% in English language mainstream programs. In the third district, 48% of English language learners were placed in structured English immersion; no students were placed in alternative bilingual programs, and 50% were placed in English mainstream classrooms.⁸

Language Ideology

The analysis of interview and implementation data indicates that the district and school's interpretation of the new law was idiosyncratic and was influenced most by the school district's language ideology toward English and the home language, that is, its beliefs about the value, status, and importance of the English language vis-a-vis other home languages. Contrary to our expectations, the previous existence of structured or bilingual education programs did not serve as a significant predictor of which language instructional model districts would offer post-Proposition 227. Instead, language ideology, whether implicitly or explicitly stated, strongly influenced the interpretation and, thus, the implementation of the proposition.

For example, districts' and schools' commitment to bilingual education was evidenced in a number of ways. In one of the districts we studied, days after the proposition passed, even before a district implementation plan had been discussed and drafted, workers came to replace the sign on one office door which read, "Bilingual Department" with a new sign, "Multicultural Department." Although this district had previously supported a full Spanish bilingual program, it provided only sheltered English instruction to all of its English language learners after the passing of Proposition 227. Not a single bilingual classroom was offered to its 5,285 English language learners, 1,944 of whom are Spanish speaking and 1,589 who are Cantonese speaking (District 3).

One former bilingual coordinator in the same district described above discusses the role of the union and district administration in the adoption of the new language policy:

Teacher: Our union, for instance, wouldn't phone call against 227. Wouldn't support its bilingual teachers. And that two things they were trying to defeat, the other one I can't even remember the number [of the proposition]. Which was the . . .

JA: The union?

Teacher: The union one, the union busting one. They would call on that but they would not call on 227. And their reason was 227 is political. And union busting isn't? I mean, I don't, I didn't understand the logic then, but I'm not even a member. So I didn't have a way to really argue. I just put the bumper sticker [anti-Proposition 227] on my car and drove around and wore the button everywhere and umm . . . But the superintendent sent out notices to his staff about the union busting measure and another which was the five percent administration one. And no mention at all of 227. And that says to me that they were very glad it was there and finally we could [claps hands together] be done with that. And within days they came and took "bilingual" off our doors. Now we're no longer the bilingual office. (Interview, 1998, December 2)

As exemplified above, language ideologies are inherent in what we do and say in the course of our everyday practices. As in the case of Proposition 227, language ideologies can be explicit and can be part of public discussions about the politics of language use and may often lead to exclusionary practice (Baquedano-López, 1997, in press; Mertz, 1998; Woolard, 1998). Or language ideologies may be more implicit and exist as part of literacy programs that do not utilize the children's complete set of linguistic and sociocultural knowledge to learn and make meaning (Gutiérrez et al., in press).

Language plays a powerful role in indexing and shaping ideologies. The language of the current literacy reforms has taken on a critically important role in shaping racialized ideologies that give meaning to the social and cultural practices of the racialized group and its individual and collective potential. By reframing an old English-Only policy as an educational reform designed to increase student achievement, English for the Children, as the refurbished policy was packaged, not only privileged English but also made it seem the only solution to the educational problems of urban schools. The current political climate and its new discourse have made it possible for teachers to express deeply rooted sentiments about bilingual education, as well as acceptable to express what in previous eras might have been considered inappropriate, if not racist. Consider one practicing elementary school teacher's alignment with the new language policy in her district:

Um, I have to tell you I really disagreed with bilingual education. It was something I did not want to do. I think it probably cost me my first job. Not cost me, but the principal wanted me to . . . was really

big on it. And I was not. You know, you're in this country, learn the language. You have that second language, good for you. It's a public school, and you know, you're here to learn English. I don't think we should be teaching you a language that's not English. If you want to pick it up at home, hey that's great, there's Saturday school. There's Sunday school. Pick it up at home with your parents. Um, you know. If you need me to translate something for you, I'm more than happy to do it. But I don't agree with giving you the same book that the kids have in English in Spanish and facilitating that. If you already know how to read, here's a Spanish book, read it in Spanish. If you don't know how to read, I'm not going to sit here and teach you how to read in Spanish. If I don't even know how to teach you to read in English, how am I going to do it in another language? (Interview, Ms. Contreras, 1998, November 13)

This teacher's remarks address an urgent and pressing problem in education and one of the more important consequences of Proposition 227: the inadequate preparation of the current teaching force. An ubiquitous concern we heard from teachers, regardless of their previous training and position vis-à-vis Proposition 227 was around the issue of how best to teach English language reading and writing to English language learners. During the first year of Proposition 227 instruction, there were few formal or informal mechanisms in schools and school districts designed to assist teachers in the transition year.

But Ms. Contreras' beliefs also speak to a more serious issue. The critique here is not about political correctness; instead, this teacher's beliefs, like so much of public discourse, reflects an ahistorical understanding of the language policies and practices English language learners have experienced over our nation's history, or even the past four decades in California. As we have argued in previous work, before the establishment of bilingual education, English immersion was the standard educational model (Gutiérrez et al., in press). Thus, while the new discourse of reform convincingly put forth the new reforms as advances, they are in fact ahistorical and recycled policies and practices.

In 1974, *Lau v. Nichols* provided the legal remedy that mandated that English language learners receive the same instruction as English-speaking children. As the Supreme Court argued three decades ago:

There is no equality of treatment merely by providing students with the same facilities, textbooks, teachers, and curriculum; for students who do not understand English are effectively foreclosed from any meaningful education.

Instruction in the students' home language was one effective remedy identified in response to the decision and was a small though significant step toward educational equity. Today the new language policy, undergirded by the same xenophobic ideology that precluded instruction in the native

language prior to *Lau v. Nichols*, ignores the historical conditions that mandated a legal remedy.

Of significance, the English for the Children policy legislates more than English as the language of instruction; it essentially limits equal opportunities to learn by restricting full participation in rich learning environments, as well as the learning assistance received from the adult with the most expertise. In an interview, one local teacher discusses the effect the new law has on her students' learning:

Okay, ooh. . . . I think I understand this correctly. . . . I am not allowed to use the second language in the classroom. Any facilitating of the second language needs to be through my aide. She is to work with the kids is what my understanding is. And that's kind of pretty much how I do it. But it makes no sense to me. And last year, my aide was not allowed to do instruction to the bilingual kids. You know, it had to be me, even though I didn't have my BCLAD. And, you know I'm working on my CLAD.⁹ But you know, either way, I was qualified to teach a Spanish class, but I was able to do this. But you know I had to do it to my Spanish kids. And now, I have to have a bilingual aide. And I'm not allowed to work with the kids. It has to be the aide giving instruction to the kids, which to me makes no sense. You know I'd rather have my aide work with the kids that understand. And let me facilitate because I'm the one who went to school. I'm the one who's still going to school for my CLAD. I'm the one who knows the background or how they acquire a language and all those things. I'm the one who's more prepared. So why can't I do it? But I feel bad sometimes, because the kids tell me, "Ms. López, why don't you ever read with us?" And it's like, well, I'll still read with you, but I never get to it. [Because], my aide is reading with them. You know, I have four other groups to read with, three others and I don't. . . . I can't get to them. I can't. (Interview, Ms. López, 6th grade teacher, 1998, November 13)

Ms. López's frustration is echoed by so many well-trained, experienced teachers who are unable to use their knowledge to assist their students' learning—to use the students' home languages to clarify, extend, or support their understandings in learning tasks. In practice, the new law has created new roles and practices for teachers that are in direct contradiction with their training and experience—a double bind of praxis for teachers who could be sanctioned rather than rewarded if they utilized their knowledge and expertise (Bateson, 1972). To Ms. López, the new policy simply makes no sense pedagogically or ethically. Relegated to the tutelage of sincere but less trained and experienced aides, those children most in need of expert assistance in an English-only context are denied access to the same instructional support English-speaking children receive.

The irony is not lost here. Even in classrooms that permit limited use of the primary language in whole class instruction, teachers are not allowed to use Spanish, for example, to assist Spanish-speaking children who require help as they work independently:

[The children] are creating a book with eight pages about a specific animal. Each page has questions and the students must write three facts in response to each question. The Spanish readers do their books in Spanish. [The teacher] reminded [Graciela, a first-grade child] that her primary language is Spanish and that her book must be in Spanish, not English. This is independent work so the teachers are not offering assistance. (Field Notes, 1999, February 9)

Prohibited from using the children's primary language, teachers in English immersion programs also may no longer use primary language materials to mediate students' learning of language and content. Although the new law does not prevent the use of such materials in modified or structured immersion programs, many school districts disposed of all available primary language materials immediately. In the months after the passage of Proposition 227, we personally observed new and old Spanish language textbooks, reading materials, trade books, and other support materials piled up in hallways, storage rooms, in trash dumpsters, and classroom corners. Across our many teacher interviews, teachers reported that there were few materials to support instruction in the structured immersion programs. As one teacher observed:

I mean all the books and stuff they bought. It's all virtually sitting in my classroom collecting dust. I can send it home with them if they select it, but I can't direct them to the books. And another thing that happened because of the Proposition is that now there aren't enough social studies books. They bought all these Spanish books, but now there aren't enough English books in the district. So they can't even take the books home for homework! (Interview, Ms. Smith, 5th grade teacher, 1998, November 4)

As previously mentioned, this emphasis on oral English language development was accompanied by statewide reading reforms that required significant changes in content and pedagogy in all English language arts programs. In a push to increase reading achievement in the early grades, English language learners were immersed in district-mandated and state-supported reading programs developed for English dominant students. Even if we could accept the premise that such programs could be applicable to English language learners, our research suggests that such reductive literacy practices, such as, an exclusive focus on the acquisition of phonemic awareness and phonemic skills, excludes these students from the opportunity to develop a larger repertoire of meaning-making skills essential to reading comprehension and interpretation (Gutiérrez & Asato, 1999). Moreover, these highly scripted and regulated literacy programs strip teachers of their agency and expertise and serve to de-skill and de-professionalize them.

In our study, for example, teachers participating in highly prescriptive English reading programs throughout the state, reported the various ways their expertise and experience in teaching literacy to English language learners is thwarted by the hyper-regulation of new reading approaches and language use. For example, in one particular school a teacher was reprimanded by the principal for supplementing the curriculum with trade books that he had previously used with success:

Memorandum

TO: (teacher's name)

FROM: (principal's name & title)

SUBJECT: Classroom visit

During my visit to your classroom this morning I noticed many supplemental books from either [names specific materials] or other materials maybe from your reading recovery stock. I asked you when these books are used and you said that you teach with Open Court and use these other books also.

It is very important to utilize only the Open Court materials during the prescribed reading time and no other trade books during the directed teacher lessons except for those books that Open Court recommends to complement the modules. It is obvious that you continue to do your own program. It is insubordinate [sic] to refuse to implement the Open Court reading program as prescribed.

Your training in the area of reading is extensive and I respect your need to utilize your training but in lieu of the fact that we are an Open Court school, mandatory that the script be followed.

*Thank you for your immediate compliance to this direction.
(Mr. Stepford, personal communication, 1999)*

The surveillance of teaching practices has profound consequences for teachers and students. Indeed, such highly controlled and prescriptive educational serves to homogenize teaching practices toward a new language ideology. The decontextualization of teaching from the respective learning community also makes it easier to rationalize the prohibition of the students' home language in the acquisition of literacy and content knowledge. In this way, the new literacy is reminiscent of practices that instantiate a form of "orientalism" that controls difference vis-à-vis the normalized world of those in power (Said, 1978).

Thus, the rush to replace Spanish and other home languages comes at the expense of substantive learning and literacy development. Developing oral English language skills rather than becoming literate and biliterate became

the focus of instruction, despite the emotional toll on the children we observed. In response to a query from one of our research assistants, a teacher we observed comments on the effects of the new policy on her students' learning:

It's okay. [She shrugs her shoulders before continuing.] Some were crying because it was the first time they had seen something all in English. But this year, they're mentally ready. [She smiles and lowers her voice, covering her mouth as if making a confession.] But the skills are not ready. (Field Notes, May 11, 1999)

Yet another teacher notes the increased vocabulary development among the English language learners at the expense of comprehension:

This is especially true especially for Mrs. Hanover's kids because Mrs. Hanover doesn't use any Spanish. Lots of kids can decode very well, but understanding is another story. (Field Notes, 1999, January 26)

These narrow literacy approaches ignore the consistent research findings that emergent readers read print in familiar language better than they do unfamiliar print (Coles, 2000). Further, the "New Literacy" ignores years of research on the advantages of using the primary language. In their seminal book on improving the education of English language learners, August and Hakuta (1997) report the strong relationship between native-language proficiency and English language development, as well as the importance of recognizing the significant differences in the processes and the rates of acquiring two languages across learners.

This one-size-fits-all approach of the new literacy denies the heterogeneity that exists among all children, including English language learners, and excludes the rich sociocultural and linguistic experiences that all children can bring to learning tasks (August & Hakuta, 1997; Gutiérrez, Baquedano-López, Alvarez, & Chiu, 1999; Gutiérrez, Baquedano-López, & Turner, 1997). The narrow conceptualization of literacy further underscores the language ideology of the English for the Children policy. And once again, the conditions that construct the underachievement of the most vulnerable student population are firmly put in place (Cummins, in press). Language, the most powerful tool for mediating learning, in this case the children's primary language, is excluded from the students' learning toolkit.

Our long-term ethnographic research in urban schools belies this new orientation. In particular, our work on effective literacy practices for English language learners has highlighted the necessary and sufficient conditions that help ensure learning for linguistically diverse learning populations (Gutiérrez, in press; Gutiérrez et al., in press; Gutiérrez et al., 1999; Gutiérrez et al., 2000a). In effect, we can say with confidence that robust learning communities share several common features. In general, these effective learning communities:

1. Mediate learning or assist learning in a variety of ways. In cultural-historical terms, we say that rich learning communities use multiple mediational tools;

2. Employ heterogeneity and hybridity as organizing principles of instruction, including hybrid language practices;
3. Utilize all the social, cultural, and linguistic resources of all its participants;
4. Regard diversity and difference as resources for learning;
5. Define learning rather than teaching as the targeted goal (Gutiérrez, 2000; Gutiérrez et al., 2000).¹⁰

Such rich learning communities challenge the normalizing baseline of the English-only practices, including their underlying ideologies. Fundamentally, these new reductive literacy practices do not harness diversity and difference as resources for learning; instead, these new pedagogies are characterized by narrow notions of learning, particularly literacy and language learning, that define diversity and difference as problems to be eliminated, if not remediated. Thus, the “New Literacy,” packaged in new state-mandated programs, necessarily prohibits the use of students’ complete linguistic, sociocultural, and academic repertoire in the service of learning. In this way, the English for the Children policy, and its accompanying literacy practices, institutionalize the conditions for underachievement and school failure, reifying the existing sociohistorical context of racism and classism in educational policies, practices, and outcomes.

Although the consequences of these new literacy practices on English-only students of color is not the stated focus of this article, these policies have significant consequences for all urban children whose dialects and registers are both devalued and excluded:

I was struck by the silence when I entered the classroom. The teacher, positioned at the front of the traditionally organized room, began to speak. “Where’s the adjective in this sentence?” A third-grade African-American girl eagerly raised her hand and spoke, “The adjective in this sentence is red and it’s an adjective because it . . .” You could almost hear the gasp from the adults visiting the class with me. My conversations with them later confirmed what I thought they were thinking. Grammar still mystified them and they were impressed. Moreover, it was not so much the grammatical knowledge the child had displayed but the perfect standard English she employed to answer the teacher’s question. Never mind that the children responded according to the script that had been prescribed for them. It seemed that in one swoop, the children were appropriating some skills and the register of the academy.

Later, I observed one Latina child working diligently on providing the missing words for a story the students were asked to write. She had indeed filled in all the missing words correctly. I crouched next to her and asked her to tell me about her story. She read verbatim what she had written on her page. I then asked her in Spanish to tell me what her story was about. She explained in a whisper that she couldn’t tell me

because she didn't know what the story was about. She had learned to follow the prompts and that made her look successful, but she hadn't understood the text (Field Notes, 2000, June 18).

In both cases, the learning depicted in the field note above is characteristic of what Bloome, Puro, and Theodorou (1989) have referred to as procedural display. As Bloome and his colleagues note:

Procedural display is (a) display by the teacher and students, to each other, of a set of academic and interactional procedures that themselves count as the accomplishment of a lesson, and (b) the enactment of lesson is not necessarily related to the acquisition of intended academic or nonacademic content or skills but is related to the set of cultural meanings and values held by the local education community for classroom education.

In the context of Proposition 227, the cultural meanings invoked in this school and classroom are tied to beliefs of what counts as learning and literacy and about the value and utility of languages other than English. In this way, the new literacy contributes to the social construction of failure by co-constructing school identities that categorize and sort children in ways that undermine their competence and confidence. In particular, the combination of reductive literacy practices and English-only policies help sustain the achievement gap between rich and poor, especially the poor, linguistically different children.

However, this fact becomes obscured by the public discourse and media reports that laud the success of the new literacy program post-Proposition 227 in its implementation phase. These reports highlight the upsurge in reading test scores on the state-mandated standardized test. These increases are used to demonstrate the success of an English-only, exclusively phonics-based reading program. It must be noted, however, that these test scores are not reported longitudinally for cohort groups and thus do not track individual student performance across grades.

In contrast, recent longitudinal standardized assessment data from one northern California city that has employed an English-only, exclusively phonics-based literacy program for the past three years projects a very dismal picture for English language learners once they reach the third grade. These particular data follow cohorts of individual students across three grade levels, from first to third (see Appendix C). Specifically, the data show that the overall number of English-only students scoring at or above the 50th percentile on the SAT-9 assessment decreased from 58% in the first grade to 48% in the third. When disaggregated by language group, the data are even more dramatic. For example, Spanish-speaking children dropped from 32% reading at or above the 50th percentile in the first grade, to 30% in the second grade, and 15% by the third grade. The language groups with the sharpest decline were Cantonese-, Russian-, Hmong-, and Mien-speaking students, 32% to 15%, 52% to 13%, 30% to 7%, and 51% to 19%, respectively.

The effects of this decline on individual children has not yet been examined. However, we were able to document the initial emotional responses and confusion so many children experienced as they shifted from bilingual to monolingual instruction 30 days into the new school year.¹¹ Thrust into an unfamiliar context, the children expressed their fear of failure and fitting in an English-only learning context. "I was sad," said Bobby. "It felt like I didn't know everybody. I was sad. I felt like I didn't know anything." Although excited about her new move to an English-only class, her new peers too intimidated Alma. "I thought I couldn't make any friends with Mrs. Hanover's class because they all speak English" (Field Notes, 1999, June 24).

During the first few months of post-Proposition 227 instruction, children also were often confused about what language they were required to use or which program they were in:

Ms. Felix says, "if you're in Spanish only, answer Spanish questions and write your words in Spanish. . . . A student asks, "Spanish or English?" The teacher responds, "odd chapter, English." The students then ask, "If you're in Spanish language do you do it in Spanish?" "You have the option," responds the teacher. "Some of you, from reading your essays, I know you are capable. If you're not very proficient, still not confident, do it in Spanish. Transition [students in a transition to English program], you have no choice; you just do it in English" (Field Notes, 1998, October 22).

In yet another classroom, the teacher reminds the newly designated English language readers where they needed to go for morning instruction.

One student, Carlos, raises his hand and asks, "Where do I go teacher?" She looks at him and says, "No, Carlos, you stay here. You're a Spanish reader" (Field Notes, 1999, January 26).

During the first year of their implementation, these policies and practices created a culture of fear and mistrust in classrooms. Children were often concerned about the legal sanctions their teachers would face if they spoke Spanish. "But you're not supposed to [speak Spanish] cuz it's against the law," was a refrain frequently heard in the classrooms. In an interview, one classroom teacher reported her students' concern about being in a bilingual class, as it was against the law:

And I know that there's a couple of kids in my class who got really scared the first couple of days of school. Because they said, "Ms. Dominguez, is this the bilingual class?" And maybe they said that because they know me from the first year when I taught Spanish and I said, "No, no, it's not, but I probably will be speaking to help if the kids need it. But you're not suppose to [the children say], cuz it's against the law." I had a couple of kids tell me that. (Interview, Ms. Domínguez, 1998, November 13)

The children and teachers' fears were not unfounded. Indeed, the law had written in provisions for teachers to be sued if they were out of compliance with the new policy. Yet, the ambiguity in the policy made it subject to multiple interpretations. In one meeting with elementary school teachers, for example, 10 former bilingual teachers reported their understanding of the law to the research team in one focus group session:

Teacher 1: Everything that goes home is supposed to be in English.

KG: And where did that interpretation come from?

Teacher 1: Who knows?

Teacher 2: I don't know.

Teacher 3: I don't know.

Teacher 1: Well it's just....

Teacher 4: Well I think from the law itself, the way it's written, that parents now have the luxury of suing a teacher, um, if the teacher is sending work home in Spanish. So I mean I have some math books that are in Spanish, but yet if I, when I send homework, I have one version in English, one. And I run copies off from there to send for homework. Because I always have that in the back of my mind, will a parent take this opportunity to sue me or the district or you know, because I'm sending something home in Spanish. (Interview, 1999, May 7)

Such hyper-interpretations of the law were commonly observed among school and district personnel, students, as well as in the community. As a consequence, teachers created instructional practices and restrictions that were neither defined nor mandated by the new law, and thus over-regulated their instructional practices. The resultant self-monitoring led to a widespread decrease in the use of home languages in school contexts and the use of more reductive literacy practices that placed meaning on the parts rather than the whole of literacy learning.

Conclusion

What are the consequences for the teaching and learning of literacy when teachers and students are monitored, hyper-regulated, and restricted to a narrow set of beliefs and practices? What are the consequences of English-only hegemony on learning and our notions of what counts as success and failure in schools and later work? What beliefs of English language learners and their communities do the new language ideology and literacy practices construct or sustain?

We present these data findings and discussion to illustrate an emerging picture of the social construction and institutionalization of failure on the grandest scale for a very large segment of our state's children. Our extensive

body of empirical work, as well as our membership in the ethnic and linguistic community under attack, illustrate how prevailing beliefs about language and literacy learning that limit, if not prohibit, the English language learners' use of their rich linguistic and sociocultural knowledge are not benign or neutral.

At the same time, our research in highly successful urban classrooms presents a very different view of the potential of teachers and students. This work highlights the importance of the primary language in becoming biliterate and of literacy programs that provide students with frequent opportunities both to use and develop an expansive repertoire of literacy skills and behaviors. Through participation in respectful learning communities, that is, communities characterized by their high student expectations, meaningful and rigorous learning activities, hybrid language practices, and collaborative and supportive strategies, students can expand the set of linguistic, cognitive, and sociocultural tools and practices needed for meaningful and substantive learning. In order to help ensure that these rich learning communities become the normative practice, we must first understand that the new language policies and practices are designed to homogenize an increasingly diverse state, and we must recognize that Proposition 227 is a proponent of exclusionary practice in which the students' home language becomes the basis of failure in California schools.

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Appendix A

District Profiles¹²

District	Size ¹³	% English Language Learners	% Free or Reduced Price Meals
1	Small	77	95
2	Large	45	73.9
3	Medium	42	63.7

*English Language Learners by
Most Commonly Spoken Languages*

District	Language/% of Total ELLS			
1	Spanish 98.9	Tongan 0.9	Tagalog 0.1	Urdu 0.1
2	Spanish 93.1	Armenian 1.4	Korean 1.3	Tagalog 0.7
3	Spanish 37	Cantonese 27.9	Mandarin 11	Vietnamese 10.9

Appendix B
Interview Protocol

Name: _____

Interviewer: _____

Place: _____

Time: _____

1. Tell me about your teaching background. (How many years have you been teaching? What grades and subjects have you taught? Where have you taught? How would you describe the student populations of your class?)
 2. How long does it take to learn a language?
 3. How long does it take to develop fluency in a language?
 4. How long does it take to become literate in a language?
 5. How do you think children learn best?
 6. How do you think that children who are English Language Learners learn best?
 7. What is the goal of bilingual education?
 8. When do you think an E.L.L. student should be transitioned into mainstream classes?
 9. Do you think that bilingual education is necessary?
 10. What is your understanding of the law as defined by Proposition 227?
 11. How is Proposition 227 being implemented in your district? In your school? In your classroom?
 12. How were the teachers included in the district's decision making process on how to implement Proposition 227? How were parents included in this process?
 13. What was the breakdown of parents' choices across the various options at your school?
 14. How do you think Proposition 227 will affect your children in the long run?
 15. How has Proposition 227 changed the way you teach?
 16. How have your children reacted to the changes brought on by Proposition 227, especially those who had previously been in bilingual classes?
 17. How has the administration (both school and the district) supported you during the changes?
 18. What has been the hardest thing for you about the implementation of Proposition 227?
- Other questions:

Appendix C

Summary of Major Findings¹⁴

1. Pre-227 school district's language ideology, not simply their previous instructional practices, influence the interpretation and implementation of the new language policy.
2. There is significant variance across districts in the roles teachers are allowed to play in making sense and implementing the new law.
3. There is significant variance both across and within districts in the quality and content of the information sessions provided to parents about placement options for their children.
4. Parents' placement choice appears to be influenced by the nature of the parent information sessions and districts' commitment to offering the full range of instructional models.
5. The convergence of numerous and simultaneous reform efforts (e.g., class size reduction, new state assessment programs, new reading and accountability initiatives and programs, and the new Language Arts Standards) is pressuring teachers in structured and alternative model programs to default to English language instruction.
6. There is minimal instructional support in the home language, despite teachers' belief in its value in the learning process.
7. Language and literacy are not tools for learning but rather English language learning (oral language fluency) is the target of instruction.
8. There is minimal professional development assistance provided to teachers about how to promote language fluency and literacy to English language learners.
9. There are few materials available to support instruction in the structured or alternative language programs.
10. In general, teachers report that they feel frustrated, underprepared, and devalued by the policy and its implementation.
11. There is hyper-interpretation of the new law. Teachers report that their fear of legal sanctions influence their practice. The result is that teachers over-regulate their practices.
12. State assessments do not parallel classroom instruction.

Appendix D

City Unified School District Percent of Children Scoring at or above the 50th Percentile on the SAT 9 in READING: Over Time by Language 1998-2000

English				
	1998	1999	2000	98-00 Change
grade 1		65	65	
grade 2	42		59	
grade 3	37	46		
grade 4		44	45	+ 3
grade 5	41		44	+ 7
grade 6	45	50		

Spanish				
	1998	1999	2000	98-00 Change
grade 1		47	55	
grade 2	17		32	
grade 3	8?	18		
grade 4		13	14	- 3
grade 5	9		12	- 4
grade 6	9	15		

Hmong				
	1998	1999	2000	98-00 Change
grade 1		35	46	
grade 2	13		25	
grade 3	5	8		
grade 4		9	10	- 3
grade 5	5		2	- 3
grade 6	8	7		

Cantonese				
	1998	1999	2000	98-00 Change
grade 1		70?	64	
grade 2	48		75	
grade 3	34	38?		
grade 4		45	35	- 13
grade 5	20		33	- 1
grade 6	19	32		

Appendix D (continued)

City Unified School District Percent of Children Scoring at or above the 50th Percentile on the SAT 9 in READING: Over Time by Language 1998-2000

Mein				
	1998	1999	2000	98-00 Change
grade 1		74	60	
grade 2	21		55	
grade 3	11	9		
grade 4		17	13	- 8
grade 5	1		9	- 3
grade 6	19	13		

Vietnamese				
	1998	1999	2000	98-00 Change
grade 1		70	67	
grade 2	34		57	
grade 3	11	30		
grade 4		22	35	+ 1
grade 5	16		18	+ 7
grade 6	15	16		

Russian				
	1998	1999	2000	98-2000 Change
grade 1		65	49	
grade 2	30		37	
grade 3	12	11		
grade 4		15	22	- 8
grade 5	8?		13	+ 1
grade 6	21	19		

Lao				
	1998	1999	2000	98-2000 Change
grade 1		59	63	
grade 2	17		35	
grade 3	10	17		
grade 4		16	8 ?	- 9?
grade 5	13		6	- 4
grade 6	10	0		

Endnotes

¹ We use the terms Proposition 227 and 227 interchangeably. Specifically, the three models of language instruction allowed under 227 include a structured immersion model that permits some use of the primary language, the alternative bilingual program that utilizes the home language, and English immersion, a program that uses English-only instruction.

² It is important to note that this phonemic discrimination exercise is problematic for English speakers too. Consider, for example, the word “machine,” an exception to the rule being taught here.

³ The new literacy is characterized by a focus on English language learning and a strict focus on acquiring phonemic awareness and phonics skills. The New Literacy privileges English language fluency as measured by new state assessment programs.

⁴ Our study of the effects of Proposition 227, a voter initiative that eliminated or limited dramatically the use of students’ home language in classroom learning and instruction, examined how administrators, teachers, and parents across three school districts made sense of the new law. In addition, we selected three focal classrooms to observe more intensively how this language policy was implemented. We audio recorded all interviews and collected extensive field notes of classroom instruction, school meetings and parent activities. The interviews were transcribed and all data were coded for patterns and themes. We report those most significant findings that were strongly triangulated across all the data. See Appendix C for a list of those findings.

⁵ Proposition 187, which targeted the state’s immigrant population, would have made it illegal for immigrants to use health, education, and social services. This measure would have required teachers/schools to report undocumented children or children of undocumented immigrants to authorities. The proposition was deemed unconstitutional and was not implemented. Nevertheless, the foundation for anti-immigrant sentiment was set.

⁶ See our work, *Backlash Pedagogy*, for a fuller discussion of this backlash and its pedagogical and social consequences.

⁷ The three districts ranged from a small district, a medium-sized district, to a large school district in southern California. See Appendix A for a description of the three districts’ English-language learner profile.

⁸ We obtained the data on instructional settings for English Language Learners from California Department of Education website. (<http://www.data1.cde.ca.gov/dataquest>)

⁹ Teachers in California can earn several certificates that prepare them for teaching diverse student populations. The BCLAD, Bilingual Cross-cultural Language and Academic Development, certifies that the teacher is trained to teach in the students’ primary language; the CLAD certificate, Cross-cultural Language and Academic Development, permits the teacher to teach in classrooms designated for English language learners.

¹⁰ These characteristics summarize the most salient patterns of good practices we documented across our long-term ethnographic studies of effective literacy practices in urban schools with large numbers of English language learners. See, for example, Gutiérrez, 2000, Gutiérrez, Baquedano-López, Alvarez, & Chiu (1999), Gutiérrez, Baquedano-Lopez, & Tejada, 2000, for more elaborated discussion of robust learning communities for urban students.

¹¹ Our research on the *Effects on Proposition 227* is a collective effort of two Ph.D. students, Jolynn Asato and Anita Revilla, and the principal investigator Kris Gutiérrez. Field observations of teacher and parent meetings prior to the actual implementation of the new law included Patricia Baquedano-López, Hector Alvarez, Lucila Ek, and Kris Gutiérrez. The work and insight of all participating in the study must be acknowledged here.

¹² Data obtained from (<http://data1.cde.ca.gov/dataquest>).

¹³ The parameters we have set for district size are Small: < 20,000, Medium 20,001-40,000, Large > 40,000.

¹⁴ These findings represent recurrent patterns emerging in the coding of all the data. The data were coded using procedures standard in qualitative research. More specifically, we used Nudist to reduce and code all transcribed interviews and field notes collected across settings and activities.