

## PART TWO

### LANGUAGE EDUCATION OF U.S. LANGUAGE MINORITY STUDENTS

In Part 2, we will discuss the educational characteristics of language minority speakers, focusing on a subset of that group, those designated limited English proficient (LEP) students in U.S. government terminology. We will also survey the characteristics of English as a Second Language (ESL) and bilingual programs that serve language minority populations and illustrate typical U.S. bilingual classroom processes.

A number of areas essential to understanding ESL and bilingual education in the U.S. are not covered in this section. See August and Hakuta (1997) for a recent review of U.S. research in second language acquisition, discourse patterns in classrooms, cognitive processes in first-language content learning, program evaluation and effective schooling.

### Language Minority Populations

Recall that in Part 1 we discussed home speakers of non-English languages, while in this part we will discuss a broader category, *language minority speakers*. Definitions of language minority vary slightly.<sup>27</sup> The definition used here is that of the source we consulted for 1980-1990 U.S. Census figures: "People in families or households in which one or more people speak a non-English language" (*Numbers and Needs*, March 1993, Vol. 3, no. 2).<sup>28</sup> Language minority estimates include more people with potential language education needs than do estimates of the number of home speakers of non-English languages. Language minority speakers may have limited English proficiency, they may be bilingual, or they may be essentially monolingual speakers of English who lack the necessary reading or writing skills to succeed in all English-speaking environments. (August & Hakuta, 1997, p. 16). The purpose of looking at language minority populations is to provide a benchmark for overall conditions and for the potential need for language services.

The language minority population increased by 36 percent from 1980-

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<sup>27</sup>For example, the U.S. Department of Education (1987) defined language minority children as "those who came from a household in which the household head and one other person spoke a non-English language" (Hopstock & Bucaro, 1993, sect. 3B, para. 7). Another definition is those who live in households where a non-English language is dominant.

<sup>28</sup>Language minority estimates were developed from the 5% public use microdata sample (PUMS) based on responses to the U.S. Census long form, which included language and school attendance questions (*Numbers and Needs*, July 1994, Vol. 4, no. 4). See Part 1, Footnote 7, for more information on census data.

1990, so that in 1990, one person in five was a member of a language minority group (*Numbers and Needs*, September 1995, Vol. 5, no. 5. Data from 1990 Census of Population.). Of these, approximately ten million language minority speakers were school age (5-17). Recall Table 8, introduced in Part 1, which shows the distribution of home language speakers among selected language groups. The young people of recently immigrated groups—for example, Hmong, Mon-Khmer, and Vietnamese—are much more likely to speak their native languages at home than are long-established groups who speak such languages as French or German. While the young people in recently immigrated groups will be more likely to need special language services, advocates also argue that the English speakers in language minority homes, for example the 1.8 million English-speaking young people in Spanish-speaking homes, and the 52,000 English-speaking youth in Chinese households, should also be considered in potential need of academic language support.

Non-English speakers who speak English less than *very well* are less likely to be enrolled in elementary or high school, and they are more likely to have lower levels of educational attainment as adults. Table 9 shows the school enrollment and educational attainment rates of three groups—monolingual English speakers, non-English speakers who rated themselves as speaking English *very well*, and those who rated themselves as speaking English less than very well.<sup>29</sup> By high-school (ages 15-17), those with English difficulty are less likely to be enrolled and by college (ages 18-19) much less likely to be enrolled than either monolingual English speakers or bilinguals. Educational attainment among adult speakers with English difficulty reflects similar trends, with approximately 18 percent of those with English speaking difficulty having fewer than five years of education compared with under 2 percent of monolingual English speakers and approximately 3 percent of bilingual speakers. High school graduation rates show a similar gap: 43 percent of those with English difficulty have graduated from high school compared with 72 and 78 percent of bilingual and monolingual speakers respectively (*Numbers and Needs*, July 1995, Vol. 5, no. 4).

Speakers with English difficulty are somewhat more likely to be unemployed, and when they are employed, they are more likely to occupy service or blue-collar positions as shown in Table 10. In 1990, approximately 68 percent of those with English difficulty had occupations in service, farm-

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<sup>29</sup> Note that a slightly different definition of bilingual is used in this table than is used in Table 5. In this discussion and in Table 9 that accompanies it, bilinguals are defined as those who speak a non-English language and report that they speak English *very well* (*Numbers and Needs*, July 1995, Vol. 5, no. 4); in Table 5, those who speak a non-English language in addition to speaking English *well* were also included in the bilingual category.

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ing, industry, and labor (job categories 3 - 6 in Table 10) compared with 39 and 40 percent of bilingual and monolingual English speakers, the majority of whom were engaged in managerial, professional, technical and administrative positions (categories 1 - 2).

Graduation rates vary by language background and by gender. As Waggoner summarizes it, "Non-English speaking people in the U.S. are much less well educated than their native-born and foreign-born counterparts in the general population, but their educational attainment varies considerably according to their place of birth, their home language, and their gender" (*Numbers and Needs*, July 1996, Vol. 6, no. 4). Table 11 shows differences in high school graduation rates among groups of non-English speaking people. A total of 15 percent have graduated, and of that group, 19 percent were native-born and approximately 14 percent were foreign-born. Rates of graduation among the Mon-Khmer, Portuguese, and Spanish-speaking groups were relatively low as compared with Korean, Polish, and Russian speakers. Asian-Indian-speaking males are about twice as likely to be high school graduates as Asian-Indian-speaking females while Spanish-speaking males and females graduate at approximately the same rate. Table 12 shows a complementary trend among adults with limited schooling. More foreign-born than native-born non-English speakers and slightly more non-English speaking women than men have limited schooling. Limited schooling for adult men and women ranges from 12 percent of Polish-speakers to 79 percent of Mon-Khmer speakers with less than 5 years of formal school.

In summation, these figures seem to suggest a relationship between ability to speak English and educational and economic opportunity. They could be seen as support for the promotion of the rapid acquisition of English for the purposes of employment. However, a number of social, cultural, ethnic and economic factors need to be considered in addition to English-speaking ability. Some of these include language and cultural distance in relation to U.S. society, social discrimination, geographical concentration, poverty, educational opportunities in native countries, resettlement and war experiences. All of these have a potential influence on educational attainment and employment. There is also a need to look at the role of limited economic opportunity structures available to non-English speakers and members of particular ethnic groups (Spener, 1988). It is possible that the U.S. economy structure requires an underclass, and the increasing standards for English language and literacy demanded by recent language education reforms actually function to maintain a pool of non-English speakers, particularly immigrant adults, to perform unwanted and low paying jobs (Spener, 1988, pp. 137-140).

The educational achievement of language minority populations is difficult to describe for several reasons. Until very recently, language minorities have been frequently excluded from national surveys such as the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 and the National Assessment

of Educational Progress (NAEP) because their English was often seen as insufficient to participate (*Numbers and Needs*, September 1992, Vol. 2, no. 5; August & Hakuta, 1997, pp. 275-304). Another reason that the educational achievement of language minority students is difficult to quantify is that smaller-scale surveys sometimes focus on multilingual speakers but do not aggregate achievement data by level of English proficiency. One recent example was the Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study (CILS), which found that the dropout rate for immigrants and children of immigrants was significantly lower than district-wide averages in the two urban areas sampled. It was also found that children of immigrants as a group outperformed the district norms, though large differences occurred in all outcomes by national origin (Rumbaut, 1998, pp. 17-21). CILS documents the rapid shift to English among the immigrants sampled and reports that students who had been classified as Limited English Proficient by schools (see discussion in the following section) remained associated with lower academic achievement and higher dropout rates than non-native students with English fluency (Rumbaut, 1998, p. 23).<sup>30</sup> Beyond these observations, however, the author uses ethno-national origin to aggregate data on GPA, educational and occupational aspirations, and other socio-cultural and psychological characteristics. Thus, from this otherwise very informative work, we cannot learn about the relationship of language proficiency (in English or non-English languages) to the predictors of achievement he examines. Ethnicity and/or nationality are sometimes assumed to be a surrogate measure for language, obscuring the language-related educational issues (Macías, 1994, p. 35). For example, in the analysis of the results of the U.S. IEA Reading Literacy Study (Binkley & Williams, 1996), ethnicity—but not language differences or proficiency levels—was reported on.

Turning from national assessments of achievement to the census, we have data about self-reported English proficiency, but we know very little about the non-English language resources of language minority students (Macías, 1994, pp. 35-36; Wiley, 1996, pp. 78-79). Two exceptions to this focus on English proficiency are the 1992 National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS), which oversampled Latinos and provided English and Spanish versions of the questionnaire, and the National Chicano Survey (NCS), which collected self-reported information about literacy in English and Spanish from the Mexican-origin population (Wiley, 1996, pp. 80-92). Re-

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<sup>30</sup> CILS studied the social, cultural and psychological adaptation, over a three-year period, of 5,200 foreign and U.S.-born children of immigrants enrolled in high schools in two large school districts, one in southern California and the other in Florida. Seventy-seven nationalities were represented in the sample: In California, the largest number of students were from Mexico, the Philippines, Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, and in Florida, the majority of students were from Cuba, Haiti, Jamaica, Colombia, and other Latin American countries.

sults are striking. According to Macías (1988) and Wiley (1990), for example, the NCS shows an overall Chicano literacy rate of 74 percent for the U.S.: 32 percent English literacy dominant, 20 percent English/Spanish biliteracy, and 22 percent Spanish literacy dominant. If only English literacy were measured, the literacy rate would have been under-reported as 52 percent (cited in Wiley, 1996, pp. 92-93).

Pending reform in national data collection and analysis, we are not able to describe educational achievement, attainment, and literacy rates of language minority populations with much assurance. A number of specific reforms have been suggested and are now underway (August & Hakuta, 1997, pp. 275-306; Macías, 1994; Wiley, 1996; Olson & Goldstein, 1996). Somewhat more specific data are available on students identified by schools as limited English proficient, described in the following section:

### Educational Characteristics of Students Identified as Limited English Proficient

Until recently, most national educational policy has referred to the *limited English proficient* (LEP) student population. Title VII of Improving America's Schools Act of 1994, following earlier U.S. government precedent, defines an LEP individual as one who has "sufficient difficulty speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language and whose difficulties may deny such individual the opportunity to learn successfully" in English-only classrooms for one or all of the following reasons: the individual was born outside the U.S., comes from a home where a non-English language is dominant, is a native American or Alaska native or from another outlying area, is migratory and whose native language is other than English.<sup>31</sup>

Counts of LEP students are necessary in order to guide federal policy-making, to focus federal training and technical assistance, and to report to the general public concerning LEP populations and their needs (Hopstock & Bucaro, 1993, sect. 7A, para. 2). However, the available statistics often differ significantly from one another. One reason is the use of different methodologies, which can be generally categorized as either school (SEA)-based or census-based.<sup>32</sup> An example of school-based research is the "Sum-

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<sup>31</sup> See Appendix B.

<sup>32</sup> The terms *school-based* and *census-based* are from Hopstock and Bucaro (1993), a review and analysis of thirteen different LEP student population estimates. School-based methods synthesize LEP student data collected by individuals as well as state and local agencies that are responsible for LEP programming. Discrete counts are summed in order to create a national estimate. Especially important are reports from State Educational Agencies (SEAs). SEAs who receive federal support for LEP programs must reply to an annual Department of Education survey, the results of which are included in the "Summary Report" mentioned above. According to Hopstock and Bucaro (1993), the advantages of school-based methodology in-

mary Report of the Survey of the States' Limited English Proficient Students and Available Educational Programs and Services 1994-1995," from which many figures cited in this paper are drawn. Statistics concerning LEP students' linguistic and geographical distribution, enrollment, English proficiency, educational achievement, and socioeconomic characteristics are briefly discussed in this section, elaborating on the following generalizations:

- (1) Approximately 3.5 million students identified as LEP are enrolled in U.S. schools, and the number has been steadily increasing since the mid-1980s. California and Texas have the largest LEP student populations.
- (2) Most LEP students who are enrolled in federally supported special language education programs attend public school. The majority are Spanish-speaking elementary school students.
- (3) Some research indicates that LEP students as a group achieve at lower than average levels and are retained a grade more often. However, the data on the educational condition of LEP students are insufficient to draw firm conclusions.
- (4) The poverty level of LEP students and their attendance in underfunded schools are two of the most important contextual educational issues.

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clude that it makes use of a more precise definition of LEP; it is grounded in educational contexts; and it is often tied to assessment. The disadvantages are that the definition of LEP and the method of collecting data on LEP students vary among the reporting agencies; biases may influence the counts; and responses are often incomplete (1993, sect. 2B).

Some federally sponsored researchers also use a type of school-based methodology. For example, Fleischman and Hopstock (1993) sampled LEP coordinators at state educational agencies, local school districts, individual schools and teachers, through mail-in surveys supplemented by telephone surveys, and site visits. The researchers weighted their data to be nationally representative.

Census-based methods use the information about language use collected on the Sample component (Long Form) of the decennial census, described in Part 1, footnote 7 of this report. Such research does not examine actual LEP populations but estimates the potential number of LEP students within an age range based on answers to questions about English speaking ability; for example, persons ages 5-17 who live in household where languages other than English are spoken and who speak English less than well may be considered to constitute the LEP population (Hopstock & Bucaro, 1993, sect. 2A, paras. 2-3). Others relate census data to English proficiency survey data by means of an LEP/LM (language minority) percentage (Hopstock & Bucaro, 1993, sect. 3B.3, para. 1). According to Hopstock and Bucaro, census-based methods have the advantage of applying a consistent definition of LEP across groups and of covering all geographic areas and school-age populations. Drawbacks of census-based methods are that they lack a valid measure of English proficiency and they are likely to undercount language minority people who live in urban areas or who are undocumented (1993, sect. 2A).

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(1) Estimates of the LEP student population range from 1.355 million to 3.685 million, with a best estimate of 3.5 million<sup>33</sup> according to Hopstock and Bucaro's review and analysis of LEP counts. Based on 1990 census data, 2,388,243 school-age children, ages 5 - 17, had difficulty speaking English<sup>34</sup> (cited in Hopstock & Bucaro, 1993, sect. 3C, para. 2). The SEA summary report for the 1989-90 academic year reported a similar number—2,154,781 LEP students (Macías, 1998a, Table 1).

The LEP student population is increasing both numerically and as a proportion of the total U.S. student population. The most recent SEA report says that 3,452,073 LEP students were enrolled in 1996-97, representing 7.4 percent of total student enrollment (Macías et al., 1998, para. 1), up from 6.7 percent in 1994-95. The LEP student population has grown by approximately 3 percent annually according to census-based methods (Hopstock & Bucaro, 1993, sect. 4B, para. 2). School-based methods show an average annual increase of between 8 and 9 percent (see Table 13).

Several explanations are offered for the difference between census-based and school-based increases. Undercount and imprecise self-rating may have contributed to the smaller increase reflected in the census-based data (Hopstock & Bucaro, 1993, sect. 4B, para. 4), while more complete reporting and changes in definitions of LEP status may have produced the sharper increases reported by SEAs. Although it is not known precisely how much these factors contribute to the SEA-reported increase, "the consistency of the increase argues for a large proportion resulting from population change" (Macías & Kelly, 1996, sect. 5, para. 1).

Reflecting the trends in census data reported in Part 1, states with the largest overall populations tend to have the largest populations of LEP students (Macías & Kelly, 1996, sect. 2). Table 14 shows total student enrollment and LEP enrollments by type of schooling for the academic year 1994-95, the last year for which we have detailed analysis of SEA reports. Table 15 lists states with the highest percentage of LEP enrollments in 1994-95. These tables show that approximately 54 percent of the total national LEP student enrollment that academic year was in California and Texas and about two thirds of the national total was enrolled in schools in four states. Besides the outlying jurisdictions,<sup>35</sup> states with the highest concentrations of LEP enrollment are New Mexico, Alaska, and California, with 24 percent, 23 percent, and 21 percent respectively.

(2) Just over 90 percent of LEP students (3,132,201) were reported to be enrolled in public schools in 1994-95 (see Table 14). However, many SEAs

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<sup>33</sup> From the Council of Chief State School Officers (1991), cited in Hopstock & Bucaro, 1993, sect. 3D, para. 1.

<sup>34</sup> "Difficulty with English" is defined here as speaking English less than *very well*.

<sup>35</sup> Outlying jurisdictions include American Samoa and Palau, with 97 percent and 82 percent LEP student enrollments respectively. See Table 15.

report that nonpublic school data is not gathered systematically or is voluntarily submitted; in addition, nonpublic schools do not classify students as LEP as frequently as public schools do. Thus, enrollment figures for private schools are probably underenumerated (Macías & Kelly, 1996).

Approximately 73 percent of LEP students being served in special language education programs in 1991 were Spanish speakers according to a survey by Fleischman and Hopstock (1993). Smaller populations of 19 other language groups—including Vietnamese, Hmong, Cantonese, Cambodian, and Korean—were represented (see Table 16), suggesting that a large concentration of a single language group may be related to higher level and diversity of instructional programs. According to the same study, in terms of total population and total numbers of LEP students, there were more LEP students in lower grades, as shown in Table 17.

(3) We lack sufficient school-based data to examine on a national scale the educational achievement of LEP students. According to Macías and Kelly (1996), not enough information was submitted by the SEAs to draw conclusions about grade retention, dropout rates, and academic test performance.<sup>36</sup> The 33 SEAs that did reply to questions about test performance represented approximately 40 percent of the total LEP population in 1994-95. Of that group, 27 percent of LEP students were reported to be below state norms in English reading and 18 percent below state norms in math (1996, sect. 3, para. 7). However, of those agencies that did report on achievement, the degree of consistency of measures across state agencies is unknown as are the standards used in reporting (1996, sect. 3, para. 8). Likewise, Hopstock and Bucaro (1993) report that "national level information on language proficiency levels of LEP students has been inadequate for policy-making purposes" (1993, sect. 8, para. 1).

Other research suggests that LEP students achieve at lower than average levels. Based on two years of a six-year longitudinal study of LEP and language minority students, Moss and Puma reported that the third-grade cohort of LEP students received scores that were significantly lower than average on standardized achievement tests: "In reading, they obtained a mean percentile score of 26, compared to 56 for 3rd graders overall. In math, 3rd grade LEP students obtained a mean percentile score of 31, compared to 55 for all 3rd grade students" (Moss & Puma, 1995, p. i-9). They also report that, compared to third-grade students in general, third-grade

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<sup>36</sup>In 1994-95, only 33 of the 53 participating SEAs replied to the question about grade retention, representing approximately 19 percent of the total LEP population. Approximately 2.3 percent of those students (13,906) had been retained in one or more grades (Macías & Kelly, 1996, sect. 3, para. 4). The 32 SEAs that reported on dropouts represented 21 percent of the total LEP population; 1.5 percent (10,180) had dropped out of school in 1994-95 (Macías & Kelly, 1996, sect. 3, paras. 3-6).



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LEP students were about half as likely to receive a grade of *excellent* in reading or math (1995, p. i-9). In schools with high concentrations of LEP students, almost 25 percent of third-grade LEP students had repeated a grade, compared to an average third-grade retention rate of 15 percent (Moss & Puma, 1995, p. i-10). Similarly, Fleischman and Hopstock found that LEP students in 1991-92 were educationally disadvantaged, especially in higher grades. For example, they found that 27 percent of high school LEP students were assigned to grades two years below norms, compared to 11 percent of all students (1993, p. 6)

(4) The poverty level of LEP students and their attendance in underfunded schools are two of the important contextual issues in language minority education according to August and Hakuta (1997, p. 16). LEP students are more likely to be enrolled in schools located in low-income areas. Macías and Kelly report that in 1994-95, about 47 percent of LEP students were served through Chapter 1/Title I, ESEA programs, which are intended to support students in school districts with high concentrations of low-income children; participation by the LEP population in these programs increased by 16 percent over the previous year (1996, sect. 4, para. 8). Also, Chapter 1, Migrant programs—intended to provide financial assistance to meet educational needs of migratory agricultural workers and fisherman—served another 10 percent of the LEP population (Macías & Kelly, 1996, sect. 4, para. 7).<sup>37</sup>

LEP students enrolled in schools in low-income areas are even more likely to achieve at lower-than-average levels. In the longitudinal study mentioned above, Moss and Puma examined the effects of Chapter 1/Title I on LEP students, focussing on their enrollment in *high-poverty schools*.<sup>38</sup> They found that 43 percent of first-grade and 51 percent of third-grade LEP students attended high-poverty schools compared with 13 percent of all first and third graders (1995, p. 2-1). They also found that third-grade LEP students who were enrolled in high-poverty schools with high concentrations of LEP students scored "lower than students in schools with lower level of poverty and LEP concentration" (1995, p. 3-6). For example, over two years, third-grade LEP students achieved a mean percentile of approximately 15-16 percent in high-poverty schools as compared with a 25-28 mean percentile for schools with moderate (50-74 percent) poverty

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<sup>37</sup> LEP students' enrollment in federal, state and local language programs including Chapter 1/Title I programs is discussed below in the section *Instructional Programs for Language Minority Students*. See Table 19.

<sup>38</sup> High-poverty schools are defined as "schools where at least 75 percent of students are eligible for free or reduced price lunches under the National School Lunch Program" (Moss & Puma, 1995, p. i-3).