SPOTLIGHT ON EDUCATION PROFESSIONALS IN THE SCHOOLS –
YESTERDAY, TODAY, AND TOMORROW (SEPPS):
A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE TIED TO DEMOGRAPHICS, STAYERS, MOVERS, AND LEAVERS

Demographics Characteristics and Career Paths for Bilingual and ESL Teachers:
A Review of Literature

Produced by the Office of Assessment
Neag School of Education at the University of Connecticut

Editor: Dr. Mary E. Yakimowski, Director of Assessment
In collaboration with key writers who also served as “critical friends.” They were:
Brian Barrington, Science Education
Marisa del Campo, School Psychology
Gabriela Deambrosio, English/Language Arts Education
Margaret Donohue, School Counseling
Dawne Goodwin, School Psychology
Dana Lovallo, Foreign Language Education
Philip Medeiros, School Psychology
Bridget O’Connor, English/Language Arts Education
Dr. Jennifer Parzych, School Counseling
David Sax, School Psychology
Yan Wei, Special Education
# Table of Contents

Introduction  
Bilingual/ESL Teachers  
  Bilingual Education and ESL Programs  
  Shortages of Bilingual and ESL Teachers  
  Background Characteristics of Bilingual and ESL Teachers  
  Factors Related to Attrition of Bilingual and ESL Teachers  
  Attrition Due to Lack of Academic Support  
  Movers within the Field  
  Stayers within the Field  
Summary of Yesterday and Today Bilingual/ESL Teacher Characteristics and Tomorrow’s Potential Issues to Address  
References
Demographics Characteristics and Career Paths for Bilingual and ESL Teachers:
A Review of Literature

Introduction

There is optimism about the future. Scholars from a variety of disciplines are conducting more research than ever on teacher education... We must continue to openly discuss and debate the role of teacher education in a democratic society such as the United States (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005, pp. 756-757).

This manuscript examines the scholarly literature to shed insight into the demographics characteristics and career paths taken by bilingual and English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers.

In 2005, Cochran-Smith and Zeichner edited the seminal book, Studying Teacher Education: The Report of the AERA Panel on Research and Teacher Education, which examined characteristics of our nation’s teachers, where they teach, and the influence of demographic variables. Gaining an understanding of how these and other factors relate to the progression of teachers’ career paths is critical, as Cochran-Smith and Zeichner report an average teacher turnover rate of 30 percent, with 6 percent never returning to the profession.

With the dean and associate dean professing interest in determining the influence of school of education alumni in the schools and on student learning, the Neag School of Education (herein, Neag School) at the University of Connecticut introduced an initiative -- A Spotlight on Education Professionals in the Public Schools - Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow (SEPPS). This initiative includes a review of literature (including information from professional organizations, NCES, AACTE, state departments, journals, etc.) of the demographic characteristics and career paths that are representative of educators from each field. This review would provide information such as background characteristics (including gender, race/ethnicity, age, type of employment),
factors prevalent among stayers, movers, and leavers, and projections of future trends in the field. While Cochran-Smith and Zeichner’s (2005) piece is now considered seminal, in many ways the information in this manuscript and accompanying documents updates the information from that 2005 book, and further elucidates field-specific teacher data (e.g., elementary, bilingual, world language, and music education). It also includes information about educators who are not teachers – including school counselors, school psychologists, and principals. Also, throughout this manuscript, we borrow from the writing of Billingsley (1993) in the area of special education to apply to the terms used across educators in all fields. As recommended by Billingsley (1993) and now illustrated in figure 1, “stayers” (retainees) is the label given to those who remain in the same position in the same school between school years; “movers” (transfers) refers to those teachers who stayed in a position but transferred to another school (in the same or a different school district), or who transferred to another type of teaching position; and “leavers” includes those who left the profession, for reasons such as retirement, finding another job in a different field, returning to school, or taking a job other than teaching at the school (e.g., school administration).

Figure 1: Educators’ career path as stayers, movers, and leavers.
The need for bilingual education is crucial due to the rapidly increasing number of English Language Learner (ELL) students in the United States. According to a report conducted by the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition (NCELA) in 2008, there are over five million ELLs in the country, which is a 57 percent increase from 1998 (Ballantyne, Sanderman, & Levy, 2008). ELL students represent the fastest-growing population of students in the United States (Bardack, 2010). Therefore, there is a need for effective bilingual education programs. However, bilingual education is faced with multiple issues, including critical shortages, attrition, and teachers moving districts.

Bilingual education is a form of schooling in the United States in which English Language Learners (ELLs) receive instruction in their native language and English. Bilingual education classrooms enable ELLs to acquire English-speaking skills by working closely with teachers who are focused on building language skills. Although bilingual education helps ELLs assimilate to a new culture and learn skills necessary to succeed in a classroom where English is spoken, bilingual educators strive to foster students’ native cultures as well. Students in a bilingual education classroom are learning how to acquire English in addition to their native languages, so bilingual educators also focus on preserving students’ native languages and cultures (Krashen, 1997).

Good bilingual education programs are extremely important because they enable ELLs to develop their literacy skills in both languages. As Krashen highlights in *What is Bilingual Education?* ELL students are able to successfully develop content knowledge and literacy, which are the two most important components of learning a new language (Krashen, 1997). Through bilingual education programs, students gain knowledge from subject matter taught in their native
language, but also become more fluent in their native language and English by reading material in both languages (Krashen, 1997). The gradual English learning approach taken by bilingual education programs gives students a thorough understanding of English.

Although bilingual education classes enable students to acquire proficiency in a new language, they also help students utilize language skills in all classes. Students in a bilingual education classroom may receive sheltered English instruction in other subjects, so that they can transition successfully into mainstream classrooms. Sheltered English entails English instruction that focuses on the content that is used in specific subjects (Krashen, 1997). For example, sheltered English instruction in mathematics and science may help ELLs learn important terminology that they will come across in those subject areas (Krashen, 1997).

Over the years, there have been a variety of terms to describe ELLs. Some terms that were commonly used in the past are not employed anymore because they may perpetuate negative stereotypes (Bardack, 2010). For instance, Limited English Speaking (LES) was the term used in the Bilingual Education Act in 1968 (Bardack, 2010). LES evolved into Limited English Proficient (LEP). However, these terms are no longer commonly used because they imply that students learning English are “limited” in some way (Bardack, 2010). Now, ELL is the most commonly used term to describe students who are learning English.

**Bilingual Education and ESL Programs**

Sometimes, bilingual education programs and English as a Second Language (ESL) programs are categorized together. Bilingual education programs and ESL programs are “not mutually exclusive” (Riley, Smith, & Forgione, 1997) and are often combined in schools. However, there are differences between ESL and bilingual education programs. While ESL programs entail intensive English instruction for students who are learning English, bilingual
education programs are more focused on using the students’ native language for instruction (Riley et al., 1997). Therefore, ESL programs are primarily taught in English, while bilingual education programs utilize both native languages and English.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), more schools have ESL programs rather than bilingual education programs. While 85 percent of schools provide ESL programs, only 35 percent offer bilingual education programs (Riley et al., 1997). This disparity may be caused by the varying instructional methods in ESL and bilingual education programs. ESL programs are less focused on implementing students’ native languages into lessons, and are more focused on teaching lessons in English. Bilingual education programs, on the other hand, constantly focus on native language instruction and English instruction.

There are varying degrees of certification needed for bilingual education teachers and ESL teachers. Bilingual education programs require teachers who are proficient in languages other than English, and are certified to teach subject matter in other languages (Riley et al., 1997). Since ESL classrooms may have students who have varying language backgrounds, and the instruction is primarily in English, ESL teachers do not need to know students’ native languages. In this way, it may be more difficult to recruit bilingual education teachers, rather than ESL teachers (Riley et al., 1997). Additionally, since bilingual education teachers need to know how to speak students’ native languages, bilingual education programs are more likely to be implemented in districts where students’ language backgrounds are more homogeneous (Riley et al., 1997).
Shortages of Bilingual and ESL Teachers

The field of bilingual education is growing at a rapid rate. From 1987-1988, the number of teachers in Bilingual Education/ESL was 15,616. From 1990-1991, it was 25,208. From 1993-1994, it was 40,324 (Whitener, Gruber, Lynch & Tingos, 1997). However, bilingual education is a field in high demand, and there are still vacancies in bilingual education positions all over the country.

Shortages of bilingual education teachers have persisted for the past three decades. Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) data from 1993-1994 showed that there were more vacancies in bilingual education programs or ESL programs in 1993-1994 than there were in 1990-1991. Twenty-six percent of public schools said that they had vacancies in 1993-1994, compared to seven percent of public schools in 1990-1991 (Riley et al., 1997). A teacher preparation survey conducted by the American Association for Employment in Education (AAEE) showed a national shortage of Bilingual Education teachers in 2001 and 2002 (Lara-Alecio, Galloway, Irby, & Brown, 2004). This shortage occurred throughout the entire United States, not just in states that had large immigrant populations. However, the most crucial shortages occurred in states that did not have large immigrant populations (Lara-Alecio et al., 2004).

More recent data has also shown a serious shortage in Bilingual Education teachers. According to a 2008 survey conducted by the American Association for Employment in Education, the United States continued to experience a shortage of bilingual education teachers in 2008 (American Association for Employment in Education, 2008). Eleven regions of the United States were surveyed, and all reported a considerable shortage of Bilingual Educators. From 2007 to 2008, the shortage of Bilingual Educators increased 0.03 percent. When looking at
Connecticut which lists bilingual and TESOL as shortage areas, the Connecticut State Department of Education’s 2011 fall hiring survey found that among the positions that were available for the 2011-2012 school year, eight of the 18 bilingual positions remained vacant, while three of the 34 TESOL positions were not filled. They also found that bilingual and TESOL vacancies attracted small applicant pools and that personnel from these districts generally rated the quality of these applicants as poor. Furthermore, the rates of new and renewed bilingual and TESOL teacher certificates were among the lowest for any type of teaching certificate (Connecticut State Department of Education, 2012).

Although there is a history of vacancies in bilingual education programs in school districts, student instruction from bilingual education teachers who lack appropriate qualifications is also a pressing concern. According to a report on bilingual education conducted by the NCES in 1993-1994, only 2.5 percent of teachers who instructed ELL students during those years had a degree in ESL or bilingual education. Only 30 percent of teachers who had ELL students in their classrooms had sufficient training in educating ELL students (Riley et al., 1997).

In states with critical shortages of bilingual education teachers, ELL students may be taught by teachers with “emergency” teaching certifications, rather than teachers who have gone through a bilingual education teacher preparation program and are certified to teach bilingual education. Because they may lack the content and linguistic knowledge of students’ native languages, bilingual education teachers with an “emergency” credential may not be as prepared to teach ELL students as teachers who are certified in bilingual education (Gandara, Rumberger, Maxwell-Jolly & Callahan, 2003). Gandara et al. (2003) have stated that, when compared with other students, ELL are more likely to be taught by teachers with emergency credentials. For
example, the rates of new and renewed bilingual and TESOL teacher certificates in Connecticut were among the lowest for any type of teaching certificate. Recognizing these difficulties, they State Department issued durational shortage permits for vacancies in bilingual education and for TESOL which gave districts greater flexibility to fill these vacancies in designated years (Connecticut State Department of Education, 2012).

Research has shown that ELLs taught by teachers without proper bilingual education certification do not make as much progress as students who are educated by certified bilingual education teachers (Gandara et al., 2003). According to a study conducted in the Los Angeles Unified School District, ELL students in classrooms that were taught by non-credentialed bilingual education teachers had negative or little growth in reading and language (Gandara et al., 2003). Students of credentialed bilingual education teachers, on the other hand, showed more progress and had positive growth in reading and language.

According to data from the NCES, bilingual education teachers had the fourth highest attrition rate at 8.2 percent from 1987-1989. This was lower than the attrition rates for two types of special education and English/language arts (Whitener et al., 1997). However, the attrition rates for bilingual education/ESL decreased in later years. From 1990-1992, the attrition rate for bilingual education/ESL was only 4.5 percent, and fell to 4.0 percent from 1993-1995 (Whitener et al., 1997). From 1993-1995, bilingual education had the fourth lowest attrition rate.

**Background Characteristics of Bilingual and ESL Teachers**

The scarcity of qualified bilingual and TESOL teachers in the United States is problematic. Knowing the background characteristics of bilingual education teachers can lead to an understanding about the shortages in the field of bilingual education and how they might be addressed in the future. Because bilingual education teachers are fluent in English and another
language, the scarcity of bilingual education teachers is connected to the shortage of pre-service teachers that are themselves bilingual.

According to *Recruiting and Retaining Bilingual Teachers*, the majority of bilingual education teachers are members of a “cultural minority” (Diaz-Rico & Smith, 1994). The amount of college students who are part of a cultural minority and are enrolling in teacher preparation programs is dwindling. In 1989, only 9 percent of students enrolled in teacher preparation programs were of cultural or ethnic minorities, which represent a 17 percent decrease from the 1970s (Diaz-Rico & Smith, 1994). Over time, fewer bilingual college students have been enrolling in teacher education programs overall and in bilingual education programs specifically (Diaz-Rico & Smith, 1994). Additionally, there are fewer bilingual students enrolling in teacher preparation programs. The lower amounts of bilingual students enrolling in teacher preparation programs leads to lower numbers of certified bilingual education teachers (Diaz-Rico & Smith, 1994).

**Factors Related to Attrition of Bilingual and ESL Teachers**

Although bilingual education is extremely important, especially with the continuing increase of students who need assistance in learning English, retention of bilingual education teachers continues to be a challenge in many school districts. Due to a variety of factors, the bilingual education teacher attrition rate tends to be higher than attrition rates for other types of educators (Weisman & Hanson, 2002). The considerable shortage of Bilingual Education teachers can be attributed to factors that can cause all types of teachers to leave the profession, such as problems between teachers and administration (Lara-Alecio et al., 2004). However, some of these causes are unique to the specific field of bilingual education, such as the workload in bilingual education, and the materials provided. Various studies have attributed the high attrition
rate of bilingual education teachers to factors such as heavy workload in bilingual education
teacher preparation programs, lack of proper language materials, and lack of support from the
community and the school administration (Weisman & Hanson, 2002).

**Attrition Rates Due to Lack of Support from Administration**

Data from the NCES Teacher Follow-up Survey from 1988-1989, 1991-1992, and 1993-
1994 showed that inadequate support from school administration was a large influence on how
teachers felt about their careers (Whitener et al., 1997). The largest percentage of participants in
the survey in 1988-1989 (30.2%) and 1991-1992 (24.9%) said that “inadequate support from
school administration” was the main reason why they decided to leave the teaching profession
(Whitener et al., 1997). This lack of support caused more dissatisfaction than factors such as
poor student motivation, discipline problems, or poor working conditions.

As shown by the NCES Teaching Follow-up Survey, the degree of support from school
administration can have a substantial effect on teacher attrition. Because bilingual education is a
teaching field that has a high teacher turnover rate (Weisman & Hanson, 2002), the lack of
administrator support of bilingual education teachers, as reported by various studies, may be
connected to this high attrition rate. Weisman and Hanson (2002) discussed bilingual education
teachers in California, and how the amount of support from administration affected their jobs.

Weisman and Hanson’s study focused on the effects of Proposition 227, a law in
California that requires all students in bilingual education programs to be taught
“overwhelmingly” in English (Weisman & Hanson, 2002). The participants of the study,
bilingual educators in California, expressed frustration at the limits imposed on them by
Proposition 227. Many of these teachers were concerned that they were only able to speak to
their students in their native languages a limited amount, especially when the students were
struggling to understand concepts in English and may have benefited most from instruction in their native languages (Weisman & Hanson, 2002). Despite these rules and restrictions imposed by Proposition 227, the bilingual education teachers surveyed were further dedicated to their students’ success, and wanted to continue in their pursuit of helping ELL students (Weisman & Hanson, 2002).

However, Weisman and Hanson (2002) found that many bilingual education teachers felt as though they worked in a hostile school climate. They felt as though administration tended to look down upon bilingual education teachers, and thought that they were under scrutiny from school administration because of the strict guidelines set by Proposition 227 (Weisman & Hanson, 2002). These perceptions of hostility toward bilingual educators may be cause for concern, as previous studies on bilingual education have found that a lack of support from school administrators is a main factor in teacher attrition (Lara-Alecio, Galloway, Irby, & Brown, 2004; Weisman & Hanson, 2002). As discussed previously, the NCES determined that lack of support from administration has a substantial effect on teacher attrition in general (Whitener et al. 1997), and therefore may be problematic in terms of bilingual education teacher attrition.

Weisman and Hanson noted that California is not the only state that has restrictions on bilingual education teachers, and bilingual education teachers in other states feel pressured by their school administrations. The authors suggested that there should be “consistent and ongoing dialogue” between bilingual education teachers and school administrators in all districts in order for bilingual education teachers to feel supported by their administration (Weisman & Hanson, 2002). This open communication will result in retaining greater numbers of bilingual education teachers (Weisman & Hanson, 2002).
Attrition Due to Lack of Academic Support

A study conducted by the University of Texas A&M (Lara-Alecio et al., 2004) noted that various studies have claimed that a lack of academic support for bilingual educators is a main cause of attrition within a district. Various studies (e.g., Weisman & Hanson, 2002) have noted that bilingual education teachers tend to have a higher workload than other types of teachers, and spend more time preparing for lessons. Also, they may face difficulty in their careers that may result in leaving the field because of lack of proper materials. Because bilingual education teachers use a mixture of native language instruction and English, they need texts that are written in students’ native languages. However, according to Weisman and Hanson (2002), some schools do not provide these kinds of primary language texts. This may cause high levels of stress, which makes bilingual education teachers leave their field, and pre-service teachers may also be discouraged from entering the bilingual education field when they observe this pattern.

Movers within the Field

Some school districts find it difficult to retain bilingual education teachers because of the critical shortages of certified bilingual education teachers. Diaz-Rico & Smith (1994) have found that often, bilingual education teachers will work at one school district, but soon thereafter, leave to go to a competing district that may offer higher pay or other benefits. Because bilingual education teachers are in such high demand, it is common for them to move from one school to another. A study conducted by Lara-Alecio et al. (2004) at Texas A&M University found that one of the main reasons that bilingual education teachers move to another district is because of higher salaries in other districts.

High teacher turnover rates in urban and rural districts, coupled with high turnover rates in the field of bilingual education, leads to a significant shortage of bilingual education teachers.
According to a study concerning rural teaching retention in Virginia, Hammer, Hughes, McClure, Reeves, & Salgado (2005) contend that bilingual education teachers are in critical shortage in rural and highly urban areas. Resource professionals, including teachers of bilingual education programs, were categorized as part of “specializations representing the biggest challenge to rural districts” (Hammer et al., 2005). Possible solutions for retaining bilingual education teachers in highly urban and rural districts align with the strategies advocated for retaining bilingual education teachers in any district. Improving collaboration between teachers and administrators, offering incentives for teachers to stay in the district, providing better teaching materials, and offering programs for teachers to go back to school and get certified for in-demand areas may help retain bilingual education teachers in high-demand districts (Hammer et al., 2005).

**Stayers within the Field**

Research by Diaz-Rico and Smith (1994) has shown that retaining bilingual education teachers begins with increasing teacher recruitment. Various programs offer incentives that make it easier and more cost-effective for pre-service bilingual education teachers to earn their degrees. Programs such as the Jefferson County Minority Teacher Recruitment Project offer prospective bilingual education teachers opportunities to work while obtaining their teaching certifications (Diaz-Rico & Smith, 1994). This project offers students a variety of support by helping students plan their courses of study, offering classes that are compatible with their work schedules, and offering financial assistance. The project also focuses on pairing prospective bilingual education teachers with outstanding mentor teachers during their student teaching experience. In this way, bilingual education students will feel prepared to teach, and will be less likely to leave the field of bilingual education.
Other programs, such as the Fontana Unified School District’s Bilingual Education Program, focus on supporting bilingual education teachers after they have embarked on their teaching careers. To combat high attrition in the field of bilingual education, the Fontana Unified School District’s Bilingual Education Program promotes communication and mutual planning between bilingual education teachers and school administrators (Diaz-Rico & Smith, 1994). Fontana’s program also aids teachers who want to go back to school to gain a bilingual education certification. Additionally, the Fontana community actively supports bilingual education and sponsors fundraisers for classroom activities.

Although some bilingual educators leave the profession because of restrictions placed upon them, many recognize the crucial need of bilingual education teachers, and therefore remain within the field. Weisman and Hanson surveyed bilingual education teachers in California who were frustrated by the restrictions set on bilingual education teachers by Proposition 227 (Hanson & Weisman, 2002). Although some teachers felt as though the restrictions of Proposition of 227 were not optimal to bilingual students’ English language growth, all teachers surveyed were committed to helping their students succeed (Weisman & Hanson, 2002). The teachers surveyed were willing to follow the guidelines of Proposition 227 and limit the amount of native language support they give to their students, but still provide students with as much support as possible. Many teachers felt as though their dedication to their students transcended the limits imposed by Proposition 227. As one teacher stated, “My commitment is to them [the students]—not to my administrator, not to my district, it’s to them” (Weisman & Hanson, 2002).

Weisman and Hanson’s study (2002) also found that teachers often stay within the field of bilingual education despite its difficulties and restrictions because of the progress they see in
their students when they are learning English. Therefore, in order to retain bilingual education teachers, assessments that measure bilingual students’ progress in bilingual education classrooms should be created. Currently, these types of assessments need to be strengthened to inform teachers and parents how to best strengthen ELL students’ language skills, and which skills in particular need to be worked on.

Superintendents surveyed in Lara-Alecio and colleagues’ (2004) study believed that the most crucial factors in retaining bilingual educators in their school districts included a variety of geographic factors as well. The superintendents said that factors such as proximity to schools, hospitals, urban centers, affordable housing, and safe areas were important to retaining bilingual education teachers in their school districts (Lara-Alecio et al., 2004).

Summary of Yesterday and Today Bilingual and ESL Teacher Characteristics and Tomorrow’s Potential Issues to Address

Bilingual education is a field that is faced with multiple issues, such as critical shortages, scarcity of qualified teachers, and laws that restrict bilingual education teachers. Heavy workload and disagreements with administration add to the challenges that bilingual education teachers face in their field. However, the positive impacts, both linguistically and academically, that bilingual educations teachers have upon their students is invaluable. Although it is a demanding field, bilingual education teachers transcend these challenges to make great strides with their students every day. They can make a substantial difference on many levels, whether it is in the lives of individual students, or in a school district. As Weisman and colleagues (2002) explain, “Preparing teachers who can make a positive difference in the education of children from diverse backgrounds requires not only that they be knowledgeable about culturally sensitive and
pedagogically appropriate practices but also that they develop the capacity to become student advocates who can critique and transform conditions of schooling.” (Weisman et al., 2002)
References


