

Entering the List: Campaigning for Bilingual Education on the Net

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This paper describes and explores the activities of members of a listserv group in their efforts to defend bilingual education in Arizona. Their anonymity has to be preserved as this is a politically sensitive issue and they might be professionally compromised by publishing any identifying details. During the period under discussion they were campaigning against the inclusion of a proposition (Proposition 203) on an electoral ballot to outlaw bilingual education. The ballot was sponsored by the millionaire computer entrepreneur Ron Unz, who had successfully financed a similar move in California – the infamous ‘Proposition 227’. The paper attempts to delineate the ways in which such a ‘virtual’ group develops the cohesion it requires in order to sustain its activities in the absence of direct, face-to-face contact. It reports on a survey carried out amongst its members to discover their diverse reasons for joining and remaining in such a group and the level of their active involvement within it. In seeking to document the motivations and activities of a listserv it inevitably sets up a model for others to examine and, possibly, emulate.

When people choose to enter and remain in a group voluntarily, the group cannot rely on external forces for its existence; instead members must find ways to create and sustain the group. Such groups must work hard to construct an identity that sustains members’ passions; their survival depends on the success of these efforts. (Frey, 1988, cited in Matthews, 2000: 80)

The word ‘community’ is often – perhaps too readily – used in connection with on-line activities, most of which do not necessarily involve any face-to-face communication at all. When service providers such as AOL and CompuServe initially set up their various forums it is unlikely they envisaged the extent to which people would want to use the Internet to establish and maintain personal and political ties rather than check on their share portfolio or the weather in Patagonia. At the time of writing, the CataList site, the official catalogue of listserv lists, points to 72,285 public lists and indicates that there are some 281,430 lists in total. These figures do not include the vast number of intranet lists, of course, and so it is evident that very large numbers of people are in communication with others as participants in groups as opposed to on an individual basis. Collective aims are being pursued via the Internet but relatively little is known about how.

Surprisingly little research has been carried out by people working in computer-mediated communication (CMC) into how such on-line communities manage to establish and maintain their group identification. However, there has been substantial research into more conventional ‘communities’. As Taylor (2000: 97–8) points out:

Studies connected with face-to-face groups have shown group cohesion to be important for a group to be effective and for members to enjoy their experience together (Elias *et al.*, 1989). Without group cohesion, individual members are unlikely to commit themselves to the group, to the task or to each other.

There seems every reason to assume that this would be at least equally true for on-line groups, where the absence of direct contact might be expected to require an even greater need for other sources of group cohesion.

This paper describes the activities of an e-mail list which brought parents, teachers, academics and others together to defend bilingual education in Arizona against an initiative similar to but even more restrictive than that of California's infamous Proposition 227, which was passed in 1998 (Crawford, 1999; Necochea & Cline, 2000). As with that initiative, this one was financed by the Republican businessman and unsuccessful candidate for California governor Ron Unz, with the intent of making bilingual education programmes illegal.

Why teach in Spanish?

Under the initiative, teachers could no longer instruct in the language a student knows best. Parents would lose the option of enrolling their children in bilingual education in most cases. And all existing programs for limited-English speakers, even those that use only English, would be replaced with a short-term English immersion program.

...

The Arizona initiative, supported by Silicon Valley millionaire Ron Unz, who is paying to hire petition circulators, shuts off options for parents that were left open in California . . . Except in a few special exceptions, Arizona parents would be denied waivers to send their children to bilingual programs. (Tully Tapia, 2000a)

Unz spent \$800,000 on the Proposition 227 campaign in California and undertook to put up as much money as necessary in Arizona. He was the sole major donor to the fringe group ostensibly behind the initiative, English for the Children of Arizona (EchAr), providing, for example, some \$45,000 to a company hired to circulate petitions (Tully Tapia, 2000b). It is widely assumed that such voter initiatives stem from 'grassroots' democracy and people may be surprised to discover that they can actually be initiated and wholly financed by a single wealthy individual who pays people to collect signatures for their personal project, as in this case. Paid petition circulators generally have no personal connection or commitment whatsoever to the cause they are working for. They may be collecting signatures for many different initiatives simultaneously simply as a way of earning some extra money. They are typically paid 50 cents for every signature they collect. Even if they are activists for the cause they may not always have the facts, as revealed by Jeffry Scott in the *Arizona Daily Star*.

Plan closes California 'loophole'

Under the proposal, parents could ask for bilingual education for their children through waivers. But the requirements are rigid: The child must be at least 10 years old, already know English or have special needs. Even if these conditions are met, school administrators can deny the request without explanation.

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Some leaders of English for the Children-Arizona seem unclear about what the parental waiver clause allows.

Whilst collecting signatures in early November, co-chairwoman Maria Mendoza told a prospective signer, who asked about parents who want bilingual education, that waivers are available.

'If parents choose to have waivers, it's up to the administration to decide. There's a provision for that,' Mendoza told the man, who decided to sign.

When a reporter later asked about the strict conditions set on waivers, including the requirement that a child be at least 10 years old to apply, Mendoza said, 'I have not read that part, that section.' (Jeffrey Scott, *Arizona Daily Star*, 9 April 2000)

A clear aim for any group aiming to defend bilingual education is to counter such misrepresentations of the facts.

A colleague directed me towards the list when, as part of a completely unrelated project, I was looking for people in the US involved in using computers in bilingual education. I joined the list, made some contacts, but soon realised that the list itself had become important to me on a personal level and seemed an important subject to write about. I contacted two of the main organisers to seek their initial approval, and once I was able to assure them of my good intentions I went public within the list and conducted a survey of its participants.

The aim is to show how an e-mail listserv can be used as part of an effective campaign in defence of language rights and how such a campaign both draws on and nourishes the community spirit of those involved. It will document the kinds of exchanges that take place and issues that arise in such a forum and hopefully serve as a guide for others engaged in similar activities. As one of the initiators of the list put it in response to my asking whether she thought this endeavour would be a good idea or not:

Providing ideas for mobilising people who will/are struggling with injustice can serve as a guide for others. The importance of collaboration in a struggle of this magnitude is crucial to stomp out the malice inflicted on people with unheard political voices. Documenting our efforts to do what is right for children is a positive reaction, offering me hope. I'm sure many will feel this way too.

Collaboration and shared aims are the backbone of the list and they have also been essential in the writing of this paper, much of which consists of the participants' own words. Members of the listserv have also contributed through

responses to drafts which have been shared with them, in response to direct individual approaches, or through their comments in reply to a background survey conducted with them. They survey had an unusually high response rate of just over 30%, itself an indication of how actively engaged the members of the list are.

The List

What is the list fighting for?

A recurring theme amongst the 'English Only' camp is an appeal to the unifying force of the English language in a nation of immigrants, as in this letter to the Arizona newspaper *The Tucson Citizen* cited in Don Hatfield's 'Catching up with our Readers' column on 15 April 2000:

The last time I checked, Arizona is part of the United States in which the predominate language is English. What needs to be stressed to those who come to the United States to live, have their children educated, and share in the benefits and advantages we enjoy in this country and have worked hard to acquire is they need to learn English. When my grandparents came to this country they spoke no English – but they wanted a better life for themselves and their children. For this I applaud all immigrant peoples. But the thing they did do was learn English. If these Hispanic parents want to help their children . . . and themselves for that matter, they should make an effort to learn English. One can still preserve one's heritage, but if you have chosen to live in the multicultural United States it is important to assimilate, and a major part of that assimilation is to learn English. (<http://www.tucsoncitizen.com/news/stories/Story1875292.html>)

Like so many people who share this 'common sense' view, the writer seems unaware of the fact that bilingual education is entirely about enabling children to learn *both* English *and* another language (Cummins, 2000: 28). This sleight of hand by supporters of the English Only movement is a particularly pernicious ploy, but appears to resonate well both with 'conservative' members of the public and with well-intentioned but uninformed 'liberals' who are concerned for the 'assimilation' of ethnic minorities (Dicker, 1996). Any glance at the statistics on 'immigrant people's' access to higher education and 'a better life', however, would also show that the rosy past of the frequently cited grandparent generation does not compare at all favourably with the achievements of the current generation in which more students graduate and go on to further education than ever before. This is not to say that everything is fine, of course; still less to argue that competence in English is the only or even the greatest barrier to inclusion in the American dream, despite political interventions such as that cited in *Bilingual Education: The Controversy* (Rothstein, 1996) and reproduced below.

Rothstein describes such a position as 'myth' and proceeds to unravel it with the facts:

Far from succeeding by immersing themselves in English, immigrant groups did much worse than the native-born, and some immigrant groups did much worse than others. The poorest performers were Italians. Accord-

1996 Republican presidential nominee Bob Dole:

[the teaching of English to immigrants is what] we have done . . . since our founding to speed the melting of our melting pot . . . We must stop the practice of multilingual education as a means of instilling ethnic pride, or as a therapy for low self-esteem, or out of elitist guilt over a culture built on the traditions of the West.

Source: Mark Pitsch, 'Dole Takes Aim at "Elitist" History Standards', *Education Week*, 13, Sept. 1995: 18

Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich (1995):

If people had wanted to remain immersed in their old culture, they could have done so without coming to America . . . Bilingualism keeps people actively tied to their old language and habits and maximises the cost of the transition to becoming American . . . The only viable alternative for the American underclass is American civilisation. Without English as a common language, there is no such civilisation.

ing to a 1911 federal immigration commission report, in Boston, Chicago, and New York 80% of native white children in the seventh grade stayed in school another year, but only 58% of Southern Italian children, 62% of Polish children, and 74% of Russian Jewish children did so. Of those who made it to eighth grade, 58% of the native whites went on to high school, but only 23% of the Southern Italians did so. In New York, 54% of native-born eighth-graders made it to ninth grade, but only 34% of foreign-born eighth-graders did so.

A later study showed that the lack of success of immigrants relative to the native-born continued into high school. In 1931, only 11% of the Italian students who entered high school graduated (compared to an estimated graduation rate of over 40% for all students). This was a much bigger native/immigrant gap than we have today.

. . . the notion that Jewish immigrant children assimilated through sink-or-swim English-only education is a nostalgic and dangerous myth. In 1910, there were 191,000 Jewish children in the New York City schools; only 6000 were in high school, and the overwhelming majority of these students dropped out before graduating . . . In Los Angeles today, 74% of Mexican-born youths between the ages of 15 and 17 are still in high school; 88% of Hispanic youths from other countries are still in attendance. More than 70% of Hispanic immigrants who came to the United States prior to their sophomore year actually complete high school (compared to a 94% high school completion rate for whites and a 92% rate for blacks). English immersion programs for Jews early in this century (and certainly similar programs for Italians) cannot teach us anything that would help improve

on today's immigrant achievement or school completion, much of which may be attributable to bilingual education programs, even if imperfectly administered.

It would be encouraging to believe the strength of such arguments on the pro-bilingual education side have led to other politicians taking a different view, as witnessed in this extract from a speech by Richard W. Riley (2000), the US Secretary of Education:

It is high time we begin to treat language skills as the asset they are, particularly in this global economy. Anything that encourages a person to know more than one language is positive and should be treated as such. Perhaps we should begin to call the learning of a second language what it truly is – 'bi-literacy.' Unfortunately, some have viewed those who use a foreign language with suspicion and their language itself as a barrier to success. In some places, even the idea of 'bilingual education' is controversial. It shouldn't be.

Such sentiments are always welcome, of course, but it was the views and votes of Arizonans that would count if the anti-bilingual education initiative made it on to the ballot sheet. Members of the listserv were fighting to prevent that from happening.

In the run-up to the ballot campaign (March to November 2000), there were some 200 members of the list, and it was growing almost daily. Fifty-five people responded to a background survey I sent out with questions about why they had joined the list; what they felt the contribution of the list was; what they liked and disliked about the list; whether they posted messages themselves; whether they took part in any events advertised through the list; and about their own involvement in bilingual education. The purpose here was not to provide any attempt at an empirical analysis of the data but merely to give an impression of what makes such a group tick and stick with a set of people who are essentially strangers but with whom they share at least one common aim, the preservation of bilingual education.

Who are we?

It might be imagined that listserv membership is more or less a process of self-selection. Someone has a particular interest in something and so sets up a listserv, people hear about it and submit a message to the 'majordomo' asking to subscribe and the process is more or less automatic. Here is how the list got started, as described by one of its founders and leading members:

Perhaps most wish I hadn't done this but most listserv subscribers, about 130 of them, were on my private mailing list. I was so weary of mailing all the information privately, and because [name of colleague] encouraged me to use the listserv which he has set up because of urging from [names of two leading figures in the bilingual education field] for this effort, I took leave of my sense and simply added everyone at the same time. I notified everyone that I was adding their names along with my own in hopes of making mailing easier. If they didn't want this, then they needed to let me know ASAP!

But there were only three who were overwhelmed with the amount of mail. The rest is history, sort of!

She clearly had a very interesting personal e-mail address book as the membership includes people who identify themselves as school teachers and principals from every phase, school counsellors, student teachers, graduate students, academic researchers, teacher trainers, university and school administrators, parents, educational consultants, lobbyists, lawyers, policy advisers, community activists, social workers, and television and print journalists. The following extracts give some flavour of their personal involvement:

My involvement in bilingual education is from the perspective of a journalist. I am bilingual who became fluent in Spanish as an adult. I wasted a lot of time when I should have kept my language ability. As a child, I spoke fluently with parents and grandparents. I lost it in grade school and college. Lost time . . . Lost opportunities . . . Lost income!

I am an administrator, a 'principal' of a Charter school. (. . .) academy is a k-12 educational system which includes Spanish and English as the languages for instruction. We look at the essence of being a human being not only at the instrumental part of being bilingual. Our frame of reference is critical pedagogy, which brings a lot of problems because we can have good teachers but extremely naïve regarding the political issues of our society.

I do not work in the education field but in social services. In social services we believe that all children should have all the help that they need to succeed. Bilingual education is for some children the path for success.

The potted history of the genesis of the listserv cited above gives some indication of the influence of the founder but, of course, these people did not stay because they were put, as the following section, including extracts from their responses to the survey, illustrates.

Why Join the Listserv?

Essentially, the people who responded said they joined the group for one or more of the following five reasons.

It was recommended to them as part of their undergraduate studies/ teacher training course

Only a small number of respondents cited this reason:

I was asked to join it as part of a class project.

I am a student @ ASU west in the teaching program. A professor asked us to join to keep us informed on what is happening in bilingual education.

One of my professors encouraged her class to get on to keep up to date with what is going on. I am still taking BME classes, so have continued with the list serve. It is a good way to know what is going on.

As the final contribution shows, *visitors* can develop a longer-term interest in the group and their instrumental reason for joining (a course requirement) can accrue a more personal force.

They saw it as a useful part of a political campaign to defend minority language rights

This and the following reason were by far the most common. It is almost impossible to separate general political concerns about minority groups and those relating to bilingual education *per se*. It is possible, however, to distinguish between responses that focused on organised resistance to the anti-bilingual education campaign and those that were focused on the academic integrity of bilingual education theory and pedagogy. That is the distinction that is applied here. Some typical examples of responses in this category are:

I am very interested in the political situation in Arizona with regard to Ron Unz and the mandating of English only instruction in public schools. I felt this was a good way to keep up with the issue as it develops and to learn what the opposition strategies are.

I joined the . . . list because I realised that bilingual education was under attack in our state and that I had an obligation to stand up and defend something that I consider to be vital to our community.

30% to stay abreast of local issues/concerns in bilingual education 70% to be a part of the fight against Unz *et al.*

This came out as an idea to keep people informed when we formed the original coalition in July 1998 when we knew that the prior month of the same year Unz resolution passed in California. Historically those of us with longevity know that what happens in California comes to Arizona.

To keep up with efforts to derail the Anti-bilingual ed forces, make connections with other bilingual educators who are weary from having to defend our beliefs and practices.

Working so far from either Tucson or Phoenix – c. 400 and 300 miles respectively – the listserv has provided access to information we would not have had otherwise.

Interested about bilingual ed, political issues and Chicano issues.

The above extracts display a wide range of ‘political’ motivations, from people involved professionally in bilingual education at the university level, to community activists for whom language rights are part of a broader struggle, and including individuals isolated both numerically and physically for whom the listserv provides an intellectual and communal safety net. The categories, of course, are not mutually exclusive and it is, perhaps, the meshing of them that lends the ‘net’ its strength.

They have a particular interest in bilingual education

Not surprisingly, the overwhelming majority of members are in this category. That said, their particular interests and reasons are also diverse:

To keep informed of current events and issues regarding bilingual ed and second language learners. Also to have access to a forum with other scholars and practitioners I would otherwise not be able to dialogue with on a regular basis.

I'm a journalist who is producing a TV documentary on the issue.

My parents and siblings all live in Arizona, and it is my legal residence, although I am temporarily in Massachusetts. My wife and I have a dream of starting a bilingual Japanese-English charter school some day in AZ, where the charter school movement is very strong. As I am doing my doctoral work in language acquisition, I am naturally both aware and concerned about recent attempts by Ron Unz and the English only Movement to make non-English languages illegal in Arizona schools.

Again, the rich weave of personal histories, professions, and passions may well constitute the sense of a real community that sustains interest in the list. The single-focus nature of an on-line forum could be a major threat to its longevity as too much consensus is as dangerous as none; there is a delicate interplay and balance of perspective and perspectives.

They had a strong personal connection with bilingualism

No doubt the vast majority of members of the list feel passionately about bilingual education, as is frequently evidenced by the messages they post. Their passion may come from their professional conviction about the efficacy of bilingual education programmes and they are keen to share their expertise in this field in the service of preserving parents' rights to choose such a programme for their children:

I consider my major role to be as follows: I post research results, those from me and my associates as well as from others, that I think may be helpful to those actively involved in the campaign in Arizona. I also post letters to the editor written by myself and others, which I hope will be of use to others writing similar letters to Arizona newspapers. I have also learned quite a lot from the postings of others, so there is an important function of the listserv that goes beyond the current campaign.

Equally, it may be the result of their personal, sometimes painful, experience of the alternatives:

My parents came to the US when I was 5 years old. I started school not being able to speak English and was consequently put into a 1C class. My memories of those years in elementary school are not good. I was deathly afraid to go to school. The fear consisted of not being able to speak anything but Spanish and the fact that we were paddled or swatted on the butt, or our mouth washed with soap for speaking Spanish. Bilingual education

stopped most of this stuff. Many argue that we live in a more 'enlightened time' and that these things would never occur again. I don't believe that. I think that the reason why it doesn't happen is because it is against the law and therefore punishable. Eliminating bilingual ed. by this voter initiative would now give teeth to the practices of yore by making it legal to punish for not speaking English. I don't have much faith in the ability of humans to refrain from committing the same mistakes over and over again and mostly it's due to fear. Bilingual education is a way of defeating some of that fear.

A case of connecting the passion and the 'pro's'? Some of the source of that passion may become clearer when the nature of those 1C classes is explained. Tully Tapia (2000a) points out that these classes were 'Americanisation' classes for students who did not speak English and who were routinely punished for speaking in a language other than English. They were extremely unsuccessful in retaining students with a drop-out rate of about 60% in the Tuscson Unified School District during the lifetime of the scheme's existence from 1919 to 1967.

They joined because of the list's reputation

It is surely a mark of some success that people join a list because of word-of-mouth praise, and, of course, having contributors with world-wide reputations certainly seems to help!

Referral by several colleagues as an alternative to the NCBE list, which is controlled and monitored by the Government.

Heard it was active and had contributors like Krashen and Cummins.

I love getting the articles nationwide related to the topic; I am glad to be part of the 'movement'; and I have to admit, I just crack up about the fact that I get e-mail from the likes of Steve Krashen and Jim Crawford.

Why Stay on the Listserv?

Whilst the presence of well-known figures may hook people's attention, they will only remain hooked if they find something to chew on. In response to a question about what they liked about the list, responses included the following.

Immediacy

A clear and major advantage of listservs is the facility they provide for putting out information and receiving feedback almost instantaneously. It is not surprising that this feature should find favour amongst members of the list:

It's immediate and it's fresh. It isn't like a newsletter that needs to be 'taken care of' by someone – that is edited, printed, mailed . . . It's cheap (no cost . . .) and nobody 'owns' it. If you've got information that you think is relevant, you can post it.

What I like best about the list serve is that reaction is immediate! Something happens in the morning and by mid-day people on the list serve are talking and reacting.

An interesting and amusing example of this was the 'pursuit' of people paid to collect the 101,762 signatures needed by 6 July 2000 for the anti-bilingual education initiative to be put to the vote in November. There was a speedy exchange of sightings of such people and discussion of the strategies that should be employed in dealing with it.

Subject: In our backyard

I spotted a guy with a handful of different petitions on campus at ASU the other day, and stopped to ask what he had. Sure enough. He was packing an Unz petition. I told him that was a terrible petition, to which he replied, 'Well, it works in California; I'm sure it must be ok if Californians approved it.' He went at it for a while, and he finally said, 'Look, I get a little over 50 cents for each signature; I don't much care what's on it.' So much for the grassroots.

This led to some discussion as to the tactics that should be employed in dealing with the 'mercenaries'.

Subject: Re: In our backyard

I think that you should be contacting newspapers via editorials, letters or even talking with reporters to get this out . . . people need to hear that they are getting paid by the amount of signatures they acquire and that they have little knowledge of what the issue is about, and more importantly, don't care so long as they make their money . . . wouldn't that put a bit of a hole in Mr. Unz's carefully orchestrated plan . . .

Subject: Re: In our backyard

Great idea to challenge ECHAR's paid petitioners. If enough people do this, it could really slow them down. It would also help to publicise Jeff's point that these are not grassroots activists. They're mercenaries, receiving money for each signature from an out-of-state millionaire.

Not everyone was in agreement:

Subject: Re: Mercenaries

Frankly, I think we're getting confused here. The signature collectors are sometimes students, sometimes unemployed people who take these jobs as a way to raise a few dollars for themselves and their families. Admittedly, not all of them fall into this category but generally speaking they are NOT an enemy of the people. It is not a news story that people are paid to do stuff like this. Every political campaign – even those by good guys – has paid canvassers to do the dirty work. We can try to have them evicted from places where they are not supposed to be; if they obstruct traffic or the movement of people we can complain to mall managers or security guards; we could pay them NOT to collect signatures or whatever, but they are carrying 30 or 40 different petitions in their backpacks and often don't even know what they stand for much less the environmental impact they may have on kids or families. These people are not political analysts, just schmucks doing a low level job for very little money. Trying to demonise them might make us feel holier but really . . .

The discussion, as so often, was further enriched and moved into a new area by a contribution from a member of the listserv who had gone through the California experience and had some salutary points to make:

Subject: Re: Mercenaries

My suggestion, based on our experience with Unz here in Northern California, is to prevent people from signing based on the issues. In our area, they used a bunch of Young Republicans type white kids to collect signatures. They liked to approach Latin people ('Hispanics' to them) to lure them in with 'Help your children learn English in school' and 'Don't let the schools refuse to teach English'. It was like they were organising while gathering signatures. My wife and I, both bilingual teachers, often spent some of our Saturday shopping time standing next to these punks and explaining what bilingual ed is and how it IMPROVES English literacy, etc to their targeted signers. We would easily turn away most people because we knew whereof we spoke (and we were teachers!!).

If they are in the signature gathering phase, I strongly suggest you organise people to use this tactic to deny them those signatures and to do your own organising as well. Maybe you should have a leaflet and try to get your own signatures for the campaign to EXPAND bilingual ed. You can do this in such a way as to avoid harassment of the poor folks who are just hustling for signatures for a living, like make it clear that you are just opposed to the one initiative. But in the larger scheme of things, the need to defend bilingual ed has larger consequences than a few individuals' right to hustle a few bucks by peddling poison. Would you allow somebody to sell smack in front of your house because he's poor, or a nice guy?

. . . we lost in California because we were NOT POLITICAL enough, not because we were too political . . . We did not forthrightly stand for what we knew to be true, we allowed the issue itself, BILINGUAL ED, not local control, to be confused in the minds of well-meaning voters. We did not organise among our base, the Latin immigrant parents, to be able to show the public that the clients of bilingual ed support it, and that the 'Hispanics' on Unz's side were either vendidos or didn't understand the issue (what does Jaime Escalante, a high school Math teacher, know about bilingual ed?) So now, after Prop 227 is the law, wherever a school offers bilingual ed as an option the Latin immigrant parents of LEP kids choose it overwhelmingly (98+% waiver signing rates in all the districts I'm aware of).

Compa eros in AZ and CO: learn from our mistakes in CA!! Organise your base now. Have parents demonstrate in the streets so that the mushy middle of the electorate sees that the 'Hispanics are happy' with bilingual ed. Forget about convincing the hard core chauvinists. Kill the beast while it's still in the egg.

In addition to such action-based postings, the listserv is also used to disseminate articles, editorials and letters from various newspapers in and beyond Arizona and to advertise upcoming events. This is an important part of the campaign as it not only keeps members in touch with what is going on but also encourages them to intervene and participate in events themselves. A number of people went along to meetings and 'neighbourhood walks' organised to

promote awareness of and opposition to the anti-bilingual education initiative as a direct result of them being announced through the listserv.

It keeps us all up-to-date and encourages us to respond quickly to media accounts.

It has certainly increased everyone's level of awareness of what's going on all over the state. There's really no other source for all this info – if I waited for the mainstream press to pick up any of this information I'd be in a bit of trouble.

E-mail makes attending to the pressing issues of the moment much easier, but the listserv is also used to promote the longer view provided by research.

Access to recent research

As well as posting articles, letters, and editorials printed in Arizona (and other) newspapers, the listserv is also used as a place for sharing findings from recent research:

It provides participants with specifics with regard to misinterpretation of data or assessments (e.g. Prop 227), as well as providing us with valuable insight and information via articles, books, etc. that are new or cutting edge.

One positive aspect of this in terms of the campaign is that it enables people to 'sing from the same hymn sheet', creating one voice from the many:

The information that is posted is current and keeps everyone connected at the same time. Everyone gets the information at the same time and I think that this helps keep information accurate.

This is important because:

It keeps us informed as to the progress of the campaign and it provides us with good arguments to use when discussing bilingual ed. in the community.

Newly published articles and books are regularly 'advertised' on the list and members also make direct contact with each other to ask about sources of information and follow up any particular queries they have. This is, of course, an important component in creating a sense of confidence in those participating directly in the debate, many of whom are not seasoned campaigners or senior academics well-versed in the arguments about the benefits of bilingual education. Many of the members of the listserv are 'ordinary' classroom teachers and parents, who are discovering for the first time just how personal the political can be as they find their jobs, their children's schooling, their very language under attack. A letter to the *Arizona Daily Star*, reproduced here, naturally led to numerous members of the listserv sending responses challenging this view to the newspaper and the list, positing a more confidently pluralist view of a multilingual America:

Subject: Re: Letter in the Star

Perhaps if Evelyn Wenzel spoke Spanish she wouldn't think Spanish is a foreign language. I suspect that only those who don't understand Spanish

Speak English in the work place

Re: the April 8 article titled, 'Note about Spanish is disturbing to some'

Josie Sarracino, a Tucson court employee, should be commended for stating (in a March 20 memo) that it is rude to speak Spanish around non-Spanish speakers in the work place unless it is business-related, and that if it is necessary, a translation to the non-Spanish speaker(s) would be appropriate.

County Administrator Chuck Huckelberry and County Supervisor Raul Grijalva have a problem if they are disturbed by Sarracino's memo.

This is the United States of America and English is the major language. Spanish may be part of Tucson's and the state of Arizona's heritage, but unless Spanish is business-related, there definitely should be a stigma on using it in the work place.

It is highly unnecessary, as well as rude, to speak in a foreign language to another individual in a work place environment if it is not required. (Letter in the *Arizona Daily Star*, 26 April 2000)

and who think someone is talking about them claim that it is rude to do so. When I, and all the other Chicano/Mexicano/Puerto Rican veterans of VietNam (and WWI, WWII, and Saudi Arabia) were there defending this country, and we spoke to each other in Spanish, no one ever thought it was rude!!!! At least they didn't say it was.

Subject: Letter in the Star

Re: the April 26 letter titled, 'Speak English in the work place.'

Why is it rude to speak Spanish around non-Spanish speakers? Does that mean it is rude to speak English around non-English speakers? If the letter writer admits Spanish is a 'part of Tucson's and the state of Arizona's heritage,' then how can she claim in the next paragraph that Spanish is a foreign language? Spanish was spoken here before English was. It is English that is a foreign language.

Language is simply a way to turn thoughts into words, a way to communicate with another individual. The only reason one would think speaking Spanish is rude is because of a lack of self-confidence; they don't know what others are saying and see that as a threat.

Solution: If you want to know what two individuals are saying, don't force them to speak English (this is the United States, after all, freedom of speech). Try, instead, to learn a new language.

Informed voices on the list inform other voices and strengthen their ability to raise them in a common cause; solid arguments foster solidarity.

Support

Arizona covers a wide area of some 114,000 square miles and members of the listserv live in all parts of the state and beyond, sometimes in quite isolated spots.

E-mail provides a forum in which they can come together and draw strength from their affinity. This is a particularly welcome feature of the list:

It enables people, many of whom may be relatively isolated within their own districts or home areas, to obtain information and support from other like-minded people. It may make of what would otherwise be isolated actions and responses a 'movement' and a 'campaign' – if we're not just posturing for one another. Because the important thing is to be talking to people who don't agree with us or don't understand. The listserv can provide information and support for that.

I think it offers great support for those who are in the field fighting many of these issues, it is reassuring to know that your beliefs are truly valued in a professional forum and then when you work with other colleagues who don't always agree the list gives one not only the facts but, real personal support and a space where you find like minded individuals fighting the same struggles.

Just how necessary such personal support can be is evident from this extract from an abusive guest opinion editorial by Hector Ayala in the *Tucson Citizen*, a daily Arizonan newspaper:

Stephen Krashen is a professional researcher who has made his fortune on the backs of Hispanic students by professing that what he touts is the best way to teach them, all to the tune of hundreds of thousands of dollars a year. Meanwhile, the man has never stepped into a bilingual classroom except for experimental purposes; and still, his philosophies are what keep bilingual education in Arizona alive. Krashen and his ilk have created a generation of automatons. (Hector Ayala: *Tucson Citizen*, 28 October 1999)

Members of the listserv were quick to respond to this and the newspaper published numerous responses in defence not only of Stephen Krashen but of bilingual education and educators, recognising the truth of the old adage that an injury to one is an injury to all, as pointed out in a message from another leading researcher, Ken Goodman, himself no stranger to such personalised attacks:

Subject: Re: Letter to Citizen Editor

From: Ken Goodman

Bilingual educators should be aware that the attack on Steve Krashen is also an attack on them. By attributing bilingual education to a single authority- a guru- it makes it appear that bilingual educators are not themselves professional decision makers but ignorant dupes following an egghead guru. I know this ploy only too well because I've been the designated guru in the attack on whole language and reading education.

The list, then, plays an important role in providing support on both the personal and political levels, as eloquently recorded in the following posting:

... the list has brought a great number of people together who are fighting and making a stand for the rights of children. Therefore it has brought a new meaning to the word unity. Where unity abides there is a bond, and where there is a bond there are people coming together linking their hearts and minds as one to form a human chain. Which in return can not be broken. Where there is unity you find success and in return there is justice. Justice for our children.

Diversity

It should come as no surprise that a listserv devoted to the defence of bilingual programmes and the maintenance of parental choice in educational provision would see diversity as a source of strength and solidarity rather than as a weakness and source of division, as many opponents of bilingual education do.

I like the variety of voices on the list – researchers, practitioners, community people, people from different states, etc. I also like having a support group (sort of) – you can feel pretty isolated in the field of bilingual education these days – the list gives opportunity to know that you are not alone.

Interactivity, and diversity of opinions and issues.

Some would even cite biblical support for multilingualism! In her report on a public forum on bilingual education, one member of the list described a conversation she had with a supportive Presbyterian minister to whom she cited the gift of tongues to the Apostles at Pentecost (Acts 2: 1–17). He countered with the example of the Tower of Babel, but as she quickly pointed out, it was when the people could only speak one language that they got in trouble for their haughtiness and arrogance – the ‘punishment’ of the many voices was actually the cure!

Of course, one of the less easy outcomes of diversity can be division, and it would be wrong to suggest that there are not also disagreements voiced within the list. Over the course of one day or two, for example, there were a few heated exchanges regarding the role of ‘outsiders’ in the campaign. It began with the posting of a message with advice on how to use the media in campaigns, which contained the following suggestion:

Thought all of you in Arizona and Colorado might want to have these suggestions sent this morning from Virginia for your TV and radio interviews. It was sent from Virginia. Teachers, students and parents from your community should be our spokespeople. Keep the ‘experts’ from other states out. They may be great support, but they make lousy press, and become easy targets. They also come across as canned, redundant and scripted. Keep up the good fight on all fronts.

As mentioned previously, the listserv has attracted the membership of a number of people at least in part because of the significant contributions made to it by ‘outside’ experts and support for their role came fast and firm:

Subject: Re: Fwd: Local public radio appearance of anti-FCAT (Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test) teachers

I don’t know where this originated. But like most simplistic guidelines

about working with news media, it's poor advice. Some of our best press coverage in Arizona has been generated by visits from outside experts like Steve Krashen and Kenji Hakuta. They commanded lots of credibility and did not 'come across as canned, redundant and scripted.' Obviously, it's important to develop local spokespersons. Colleagues who are fighting anti-bilingual initiatives need to organise on a statewide basis and outside supporters should follow their leadership – e.g., regarding the kinds of messages most likely to be effective. But discouraging the participation of allies from other states makes no sense whatsoever. The assault on bilingual education is a national phenomenon, after all. The sooner everyone in the field recognises that, the stronger our response will be.

This position was supported and developed further by a contribution that opened the debate into the role of 'inside' experts:

You are certainly correct in your statement. There is also one factor that has been left out of this equation: the experts who live in Arizona. In my opinion too many local experts are remaining quiet during this battle. Is this a case of 'Ivorytoweritis' or is it 'Objectivitis'? Come on, we can't afford to have our biggest guns engulfed by the silence of indifference! This fight cannot be won by teaching classes, publishing or reading papers in conferences only. Academics have the responsibility to let the general public know how they stand on bilingual education. The cause of biculturalism and biliteracy in our state needs their participation today, more than ever, as a political being, not just as a scholar.

There were one or two more exchanges that were, it might be said, more personal than political, and the episode was brought to a close with this timely and well-judged intervention by one of the founders of the listserv:

Subject: Re: Local public radio appearance of anti-FCAT teachers

Dear Participants,

Please, allow me to discuss the 'outsiders'.

It has now been three years (March) that Tucson has been fighting the anti-bilingual forces. Wendy Goodman, under the leadership of Leonard Basurto, had the insight to invite national researchers to set the record straight on outcomes of bilingual education. Both, Dr. Stephen Krashen and Jim Crawford, as early as Spring of 1997, once again, came to our rescue. And they were VERY effective.

...

Had it not been for the foresight of 'outsiders', we would not be as far along, united, as we are today. When no insider could foresee what was about to come to AZ in 1997, two outsiders saw what was about to happen in our state. The leadership provided by Steve and Jim to our state has been exemplary. I only hope that when the time comes for other states, you are able to find support from those you most value in the field, like we have found in Arizona. Many are not aware of the amount of time these 2 men continue to devote to the media, organisations and events throughout the state weekly behind the scenes. Without the 'outsider' we would not have avoided the pitfalls of CA, or the success either. I am so very grateful, thanking God for

his compassion, for every 'outsider'. I welcome all who can help us.

***, I don't know the intention of the words you posted, only you and God know your heart. As for 'outsiders', including you, ALL have been asked to participate, help us with letters, thoughts and actions and even donations now, in a constructive effort, against those that would hurt our children.

With all sincerity, let us once again focus on those that attempt to destroy what has been so painstakingly built.

This is a powerful illustration of what makes the listserv so successful; its members are able to exhibit their diversity and disagreements because they are confident of their commitment to a common cause. A network of voices raised in and for harmony. *E pluribus unum*, out of the many comes one – a very different notion than one voice, or tongue, being imposed on the many.

Conclusion?

A conventional paper might be expected to list the various motivations that led the members of the listserv to join it, to categorise the types of activities it promotes, and analyse the exchanges that had kept participants returning. Critics might argue that without this sort of analysis of implications and recommendations for future action the paper lacks the intellectual rigour required of a scholarly journal. I accept this to a degree and will attempt some synthesis of the material here, which I have largely left uncommented upon in the body of the paper as it was my intention to allow the voices to speak for themselves. However, by its very nature this paper is inevitably more descriptive of an emerging phenomenon that will forge its own path than prescriptive about what direction the path – or paths – will take. That said, it is important to address three key areas that might be of use to existing or future listservs in this area.

Who should join the listserv and why?

Listservs are likely to function best as 'closed shops' which people request to join and are admitted to on the basis of confidentiality. This is important as it creates a space in which people can express and develop their views in an environment of challenging but supportive solidarity. What the list under discussion demonstrated is that people will seek to join for a wide variety of reasons, from the utilitarian (a course requirement), the personal (they are bilingual or are attracted by the reputation of known contributors), the professional (they are employed in a field that has a particular connection with bilingual education such as teacher, administrator, journalist, researcher), or the political (they are involved in political campaigns involving bilingual education).

Recruitment to a listserv is, in many ways, similar to that of a real community in that it largely involves direct personal contact of some sort, e.g. through a recommendation of a current member to a prospective one, through a professor asking students to join it, or, as in my own case, someone almost incidentally discovering it, observing it a while and finding it a good place to be. There is an element of 'active' recruitment in this but much of it is chance – the beginning point for this one being the address book of one of the organisers, for example. Other listservs may wish to explore more direct and explicitly proactive ways of recruiting particular individuals or groups to their membership to ensure the

breadth and depth required to sustain it by tapping into existing networks (professional and community based). The reasons for this are embedded in the second key area.

Retaining commitment to the list

The reasons for remaining on the listserv are naturally as diverse as those for joining it. When asked, people said they responded to aspects such as the immediacy of the feedback – the fact that they could log on, ask or respond to a contribution and get feedback in minutes; the access it gave them to recent research – contributors frequently providing hyperlinks or other pointers to documents that would be of direct relevance to their particular concerns; the support it gave them – participants were supported in situations where they were isolated physically or intellectually and drew strength and persistence from the contributions of peers. Diversity was also cited as a positive reason for remaining part of the list – in some ways a surprising if encouraging finding since one might assume it was a commonality of interest. However, recalling the quotation from Frey that opened this paper:

... groups must work hard to construct an identity that sustains members' passions; their survival depends on the success of these efforts.

It is perhaps less surprising that passions would be aroused by difference.

It is, of course, important to be open to diversity and possible conflict; as Blake said, there can be no progress without contraries. Inevitably within the listserv there were tensions that surfaced over direction and strategies (e.g. the role of 'outsiders' presented above). The organisers, as in this case, will need to act as moderators and, if necessary, be prepared to intervene in a discussion thread and bring it to a close if it appears to be undermining the larger aims of the group. However, it is also important they recognise that the membership needs to be broad and diverse if it is to provide the richness of perspectives they can subscribe to and that will keep them opening their e-mails rather than simply sending in an 'unsubscribe' message.

One of the complicating aspects of a *virtual* as opposed to a *real* community stems from the fact that people can more easily participate through e-mail than physically. They do not have to attend meetings in distant locations at specific points in time; they can simply log on from the comfort of their home or office at a time that suits them and pay attention to only those items that directly interest them. This is at once a strength and a weakness. It can be argued that it is the 'discipline' of meetings, with their structured agenda, procedures and hierarchies of leadership that lends cohesion to a group. These features are absent from a listserv in which standing orders are substituted by 'netiquette'. Undoubtedly, the listserv had many intrinsic features that kept people returning, but it was also the external, real-world events it alerted people to and sought their direct engagement with that also connected the passion and the prose.

The listserv as a substitute for action?

I have deliberately focused on the positive aspects of the listserv but it would be wrong not to at least raise the question about the possible dangers of a virtual community.

There is a risk that the listserv acts as a substitute for action, functioning as a talking shop rather than an organising tool. Whilst the listserv did inform people of meetings and campaigns that were taking place across the state and sought to recruit their active involvement, it is possible that for many of the participants this was not an important part of their participation. Does this matter? In one sense, of course, it does, as there is little comfort in winning an argument in a chat-room if it is lost in the voting cubicle, and equally there is no point in advertising that there is a meeting taking place if nobody turns up. That said, this is not really something that the organisers of a listserv can do much about. Just as political parties contain activists and 'fellow travellers' so too a listserv will contain a wide selection of people who will engage at different levels with the campaigning side of the group's aims. There will be virtual activists and lurkers. So long as the listserv's aims are not only about a particular campaign with a specific goal (e.g. defeating a particular proposal) but also about winning or sustaining hearts and minds, there is perhaps less to fear from the amorphous nature of the virtual community. Perhaps it is also worthwhile recalling the definition of 'virtual', which the *Shorter Oxford Dictionary* lists as:

1. Possessed of certain physical virtues or capacities . . . capable of exerting influence by means of such qualities.
2. Capable of producing a certain effect or result; effective, potent, powerful.

What is important is that listserv organisers recognise the diversity of interests and promote both the *influence* and *effects*. A listserv is not a democracy; no votes are taken and no policies are determined by discussion. There may even be times when intervention is necessary to ensure that it remains focused on primary goals, as in the episode cited earlier relating to the disagreement on the role of outside experts. What the listserv crucially and uniquely offers is an alternative way of organising and an alternative way of campaigning and informing that may run the risk of supplanting direct action but counterbalances this by providing access and links that are not as readily available through other real-time media.

Academic papers generally seek to reach a conclusion by discussing the reasons for the success or failure of the method presented and its replicability. Given that the campaign to defeat Proposition 203 in Arizona was unsuccessful (and by roughly the same depressing margin of 2:1 as happened with Proposition 227 in California), then it might be argued that it was a failure. However, this would not be an appropriate conclusion as the campaign to educate people about bilingual education and to support those involved in defending it does not end with the passing of the proposition. The electoral failure in Arizona does not mean that the fight to defend bilingual education in the state is at an end and it will also inform the battles to come in New York and Colorado and anywhere else where Unz and others seek to outlaw it.

In that spirit, I would like to close this paper with a message from one of the members of the listserv, Ken Goodman. The day before the ballot result was declared, Ken Goodman posted an uplifting, effective, potent and powerful message, which in many ways is as perfect a summary of the aims of this paper as it is of what the campaign for bilingual education was – and will continue – to be about:

Subject: Whatever happens

From: Ken Goodman,

Whether 203 passes or is defeated, we're all still winners. We have seen our power when we are united. In a real sense Unz, his money, and his handful of cohorts have accomplished something they hadn't intended. They have brought together a powerful coalition of teachers, educators, Hispanics, native Americans, bilingual educators, civil libertarians, and concerned citizens. Now its up to us to maintain this coalition and to begin the task of undoing the damage of 203 if it passes. And, if it fails, continuing to fight the battle to defend and improve the education of all of Arizona's students, to extend freedom to teach of our professionals, and to protect the choices of parents.

We've come to understand that proposition 203 was part of a broad elitist, racist attack on public education, on professionalism of teachers, on the rights of minorities, on equal educational opportunity. We need to continue the fight in the courts, in our own initiatives to be offered next time around, in our classrooms, and in educating the public. We need to keep up the pressures on politicians, on school boards, on the press. They've seen our strength too and they know what we can accomplish.

In addition to undoing any damage done by 203 we need to broaden our agenda.

To expand and strengthen our coalition.

To oppose AIMS and other threats to a supportive rich curriculum.

To oppose other attempts to drive students out of school and deny them diplomas and rich supportive curriculum.

To elect school board members, legislators, and a state superintendent who will support bilingual education and the rights of teachers to teach and students to learn.

If we lose this round, with the strength we've built we can ultimately prevail. If we win this round let's not stop here. And congratulations to the heroes of this wonderful campaign. Let's draw courage from the rallies, the marches, the door to door campaigning and the enlightenment we've brought to a wide body of citizens.

Ken Goodman

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