



TRANSCRIPT

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Title: DEEPER LEARNING PODCAST EP. 4 Bilingual Education

[SFX: whoosh]

Alyx Nguyen: “Growing up, my parents didn't teach me Vietnamese, which was a huge part of our culture, but the reason why they didn't is because they wanted me to be more like white-passing, where like, you know, in America, it's easier to, to you know if you don't have an accent or you don't have an accent or you can be like submersive in, in the culture. And, they gave me like a white name. They made sure that I didn't have the accent, that I didn't know the language. And, I don't know, I guess it felt like a deprivation of something that should be a part of me but isn't.”

Mijares: Alyx Nguyen is a high school student in Huntington Beach California, her story is shared by many students across our country, but this story is now changing.

Hi, I'm Dr. Al Mijares Orange County Superintendent of Schools, in this episode of the Deeper Learning Podcast we are going to take a look a remarkable story; a story of culture, and language. One of the most troubling, paradoxical problems that faced public education in America over the past several decades has been bilingual education. Despite the fact that the world has shrunk due to the rapid expansion of social media, multiple language acquisition is needed now more than ever for students. Business people see it as a commodity; but there is still resistance. Some politicians and educators view it as a threat to the American culture, and the mastery of the English language. Believe it or not, my mother was disciplined for speaking Spanish as a young girl in Los Angeles, she eventually dropped out of high school. In the 1970's, proponents and experts of bilingual education were criticized, vilified, and blamed for poor student achievement, and the decline of public education, especially for poor Latino students. But encouragingly across the country we are seeing a resurgence of bilingual education. Parents and educators are embracing the idea of our next generation growing up as multilingual, and multi-literate citizens in the world. In fact many states are experiencing a shortage of bilingual educators. Here in Orange County California we have some of the most exciting and

innovative bilingual programs in the nation; we'll look at the history of Bilingual Education in California and then closely examine a few of Orange County's exemplary programs. But first, back to Alyx:

Alyx: I think growing up, I totally wished that I could understand or at least speak Vietnamese because I'm the eldest on my dad's side. I'm the eldest cousin, and my younger cousins know Viet. So they would say jokes or converse fluently in Vietnamese and I wouldn't understand a lick of it and I felt a little like left out.

Mijares: All parents want what is best for their children. They desire their kids to succeed and have a better life than they themselves had. For most of the last century many immigrant families and native families have felt that the best way for their children to succeed was to learn English and be able to "assimilate" to the perceived American culture.

Alyx: Yeah, I think my parents didn't teach me it because they figured it was more useful to know English than it was to know Vietnamese.

Mijares: This sentiment is changing, and changing rapidly. Dr. Anaida Colon-Muniz, Professor of Education at the College of Educational Studies at Chapman University, has been a part of this movement from the beginning.

Anaida: In California, bilingual education began to take hold during the Civil Rights Movement and after the '60s and '70s. Then there were laws that were passed to allow for bilingual education that went along with some of the federal legislation and other states who were following suit. And it was basically because students were not getting adequate educational opportunities. One of the key cases was Lau versus Nichols, which was a San Francisco case in the 1970s, where the judge said that even if you have one student who speaks a language other than English, they have a right to an education and you have to do whatever it takes to help them be able to meet graduation requirements, including the use of the native language."

Mijares: These early programs were experimenting with what worked and what didn't, and they created the basis for today's programs. With a large diverse immigrant population, California educators had to find ways to help all students.

Anaida: In the '80s and early '90s, we enjoyed a growth of bilingual programs in the State of California. And there was a shortage of bilingual teachers then as well, but we had a plan to meet the shortage.

Mijares: If bilingual programs enjoyed popularity throughout the state, why are we just now having this conversation and talking about the "resurgence" of these important programs?

Anaida: We could say that about 30% of the population were actually in bilingual programs at the time of Prop 227, which hit around 1998 and basically tried to eliminate bilingual education.

Mijares: She's referring to the statewide ballot initiative known as Proposition 227, which was passed in 1998, changing California's Education Code. Here is Nicole Chavez, head of the Orange County Department of Education's Services for English Language Learners Unit.

Nicole: ...it was a policy that was enforced throughout our state and though it didn't necessarily outlaw certain elements of education, it did essentially move everybody to this norm of one year immersion. So essentially, schools were being prompted to... if you have English learners they have to reach proficiency within a year's time. And research shows that language acquisition true proficiency comes five to seven years. "

Mijares: For some, Prop 227 was like throwing a wet blanket on California's burgeoning bilingual programs. Many of these programs were eliminated, but others persisted. The reason? Parents wanted them. ... It's easy to forget that while we may have politicized discussions about the state of education from the state and national perspectives, the heart of education is driven by local communities — most notably, the parents of children attending local schools. But before we explore how these programs persisted and the fate of bilingual education in California, let's take a quick diversion.

[Music: Upbeat]

What exactly is bilingual education? What does it look like in our schools? OCDE Coordinator and Dual Immersion expert Diana Hernandez filled us in on the most popular type of comprehensive program called “Dual Immersion.” It’s worth noting that most of the programs here in Orange County are Spanish/English Dual Immersion Programs.

Diana: Yeah, so going into the type of program or the type of model so they're called. A 90/10 model, it actually starts 90% of the day in Spanish, 10% of the day in English. So depending on the program, then that could look into Kindergarten. Most of the programs start in Kindergarten are 90/10 then go 80/20, and by fourth grade they're 50/50. Or other program models are the 50/50 model, then you have, you're 50% of the day is in your target language, for my case it was Spanish. And then 50% of your day is in English. And then you have, depending on the model, you could have one teacher or you could have two teachers being models of that language.

[Background Classroom-Children speaking Spanish]

Nicole: But I think beyond kind of the technical elements of Dual Immersion Programs, what you feel is going to be classrooms that embrace multilingualism. So you'll hear students taking risks with language. You're going to hear students playing with language, having fun with language.

Mijares: Nicole Chavez continues...

Nicole: And I think the other piece, when you often walk into a Dual Immersion Program, is that, the self-efficacy, the confidence, that so many of our students have, in being in these programs. Whether they're students that might be English only students in another target language lesson, or the student that is possibly for the first time the majority in that classroom. There is a sense of freedom by many of our students in that, and yeah, at times some anxiety too, because you're grappling with new

experiences, language, iterations from your teacher you might not understand, but the culture often of Dual Immersion Classroom is we're in this together.

[Background Classroom-Children speaking Spanish]

Mijares: That sense of freedom, of a safe space to experiment with language, is key to students acquiring multiple languages; and these programs are proving very popular with everyone, both English learning, and English fluent families.

The concept of learning new languages at a young age isn't new, and the notion that younger minds are more malleable and therefore more capable of absorbing new languages has become popular; however, the ease to which children take to new languages might have more to do with the inherent nature of childhood... unlike adults, they're not afraid to make mistakes. Here's Diana again:

Diana: So let me give you an example of maybe a student who is English only. When they're three or four years old, they're going to make errors. It's actually kind of cute. Parents think, "Oh my god that's so cute, he said that backwards!" Or he said this or he over generalized. And so we just tell them, we repeat it, say it with me. And so we find that that's actually normal in any language. So you're learning a second language, oh you're saying this backwards or you're saying this in a plural form. With age, we become more language conscious. And we become, not just conscious with language but we become identity conscious. And we get embarrassed to play with language.

So even though it's easier at a young age, I mean it's easier actually at an older age because you could make those transfers, those connections to your primary language. You could say, "Oh, that's the grammatical rule that we don't use." It's really hard to make those mistakes in front of peers and to really, as an adult, want to speak to a language. So, you could learn a second language any time, really, but it's easier in childhood, because we have ability to play with language. Wherein as in adulthood it's something that then becomes really hard or risky to do.

Mijares: What else is scientific data saying about dual language acquisition from an early age? Here's Chapman Professor Dr. Anaida Colon-Muniz:

Anaida: Parents overall are interested, and that's a good sign, because I think science now has provided tremendous support to what we already knew intuitively as bilingual educators, that kids do better and have the capacity to be fluent in more than one language, to be literate in more than one language, to be bicultural. We knew that, but now we have the science for example, some of the research shows that Alzheimer's can be deterred by over five years if you know more than one language. We know that certain parts of the brain get opened... when you allow for the development of more than one language. So there are more parts in the brain that actually develop.

Mijares: Let's get back to our story. As proposition 227 became law and was implemented, parents in some areas fought for their dual language programs to continue. The dual language program in the Saddleback Valley Unified School District, located in south Orange County, is one of the most well-known programs in the state. Parents here helped save the program, and it's thrived ever since. Karen Fortt, bilingual resource teacher for the Two-Way Immersion program, takes us back to 1998:

Karen: A small group of parents, were interested in copying, basically, what was starting to happen in other, well, already they had in other states, but actually they wanted that in Orange County. So basically, they put together a plan, they presented it to the Board of Education for Saddleback, and it was a go. At that time we had a two-way immersion program only at Gates Elementary School and Lake Forest actually elementary school and Lake Forest so the year of 1998 is when we reach all the way up to sixth grade, and so it was very interesting because at that time there were 300 two-way immersion kiddos and then out of 700 kids in the school.

And yet when the Prop. 227 came along it was like total shock by all these families who are totally dedicated to the program.

Mijares: To save their program parents and the school district worked together to find a unique solution.

Karen: And then when it passed, Saddleback was able to get Ralph Gates Elementary two-way immersion program as a dependent charter. So parents signed waivers, we were one of the first schools, the first one actually in Orange County, I believe, that passed these waivers. Families were very happy doing that and to be able to get an exemption to Prop. 227

Mijares: In fact, to this day their program remains an dependent charter; and the district has continued to strengthen the program and draw students from all over the area. Saddleback Valley remains one of the few dual language programs that spans kindergarten through the 12th grade and is an example to many up-and-coming programs across the state.

Karen: We get a lot of visitors from around the country because of the fact that we go all the way through 12th grade. We are also collaborating and part of an International Spanish Academies with the Consulate of Spain. So our students have the ability to at the end as seniors they can apply at the Consulate for a dual diploma as if they will have been studying also in Spain...

Mijares: The program in Saddleback Valley was so important to the community that they stood up and made sure it continued in the face of adversity. On the other side of the county, in Anaheim, a budding dual language program emerged in the middle of this trying time for bilingual programs in California. Prop 227 had a provision built into it to enable communities to start language programs if the parents wanted it. Dr. Mary Grace, Assistant Superintendent in the Anaheim Elementary School District, share's their story:

Mary: We had a group of parents that were interested, and they lived in the Westmont Price area, that's two of our schools. And they knew that through Prop 227 that we were required to provide some type of bilingual education if they had 20 parents. So they came to the district and met with the superintendent, it's when their children were in kindergarten. That's why we started them in first grade, because we needed some planning time. And once it started, it just grew.

Mijares: Once the program in Anaheim showed success, more and more parents wanted their students enrolled and the program expanded. Today it encompasses six elementary schools, and the program has developed ties with the other local districts so students may continue through high school. Dr. Grace describes the demand...

Mary: Every time we did the information meetings to explain the program to parents throughout our district, the meetings grew bigger and bigger, and the demand grew bigger. The other thing that we were able to demonstrate to our community was the results were phenomenal. While the students may not have shown great academics in kinder, first, and second, because of the two languages, once they hit third through sixth grade they started their academics in both English and Spanish started to far exceed their regular grade peers...I think as educators I don't think we understood Prop 227 fully. I think we accepted it as an English only program. So we just started down that path, and didn't question, if you will. And then it's not just in southern California or in California where the need for students to develop multiple languages is, I think it's across the nation. So I just think it's becoming a more global citizen that parents want for their children.

Mijares: The ideas of global citizenship, and multiculturalism are so important to the growth of these language programs, but before we dive into that, what happened to Prop 227? Thus far we've been referring to it in past tense. Anaida Colon Muniz sets the scene at the turning point in this story:

Anaida: After almost 20 years of eliminating bilingual programs down to about only 5%, we noticed, of course, through research how this was negatively impacting the student population... Kids in special education numbers were increasing. Students who could have been otherwise meeting requirements to exit at high school were not. And yet, the bilingual programs that were in place and growing were the dual language programs, and those kids were doing better, generally speaking, as well or better than even some of the best structured English immersion classes.

Mijares: In 2016, things began to change... Nicole Chavez:

Nicole: ...in 2016, 76% of California voters passed our Prop 58, our Edge Initiative. And with that came really a mending of... not only the legislation that was previous Prop 227 but an official shift of mindset. Since Prop 227 was in place and during that time, there was huge advocates that were trying to re-shift the mindset of our state about valuing the diversity of our state. And it's taken this long to be able to kind of come around again. And for that high of a percentage to vote in favor of Prop 58, which essentially is showing the value of the diversity in our state, the cultures that are represented, that we are a global society and it's of added value that we're bringing attention to that... Prop 58 removed limits on native language instruction. So previously it was essentially your... Prop 227 really focused on predominant instruction in English. So it removed those limits. Looking at biliteracy as a 21st century skill that would enhance communication. So that's the gist of what Prop 58 was bringing back to our schools.

Mijares: It was the passage of another ballot initiative, Proposition 58, that changed the outlook for many dual language programs, and those districts and schools that aspired to implement them. Orange County is now the home of more than 14 Districts with Dual Immersion language programs including 35 schools, and 2 Charter Schools. And while Spanish/English remains the most prevalent, it is by no means the only 2 languages being taught.

Shannon: In 2015, we opened the first Vietnamese Dual Language Immersion Program in the state of California. I'm very excited about that and the mental shift on English learners and bilingual education has completely changed. We actually now, our goal is to have students become biliterate. Being able to read, write, listen and speak in English and Vietnamese or whatever target language. It's definitely a turnaround in the passage of Prop 58 has definitely helped open those doors.

Mijares: That's Shannon Villanueva principal at DeMille Elementary in the Westminster School District. Having the first Vietnamese-English Program in the state, is not without its challenges.

Shannon: What we found is that the 50/50 model is really what we embrace because we have families and staff that don't want their students to not be receiving English instruction every single day. You

know, because they want their child to be exposed to both languages. That's why 50% of their day is in English and 50% of their day is in Vietnamese every single day. And we're finding really good success with that. And the other challenge that we would face if we were using a 90/10 with the Vietnamese, is limited curriculum. That has been our challenges . If we were to do 90% of the day in Vietnamese, the materials don't exist at this time.

Mijares: Limited materials hasn't stopped Westminster, or other districts, from adopting languages that are important to their local communities, Spanish, Vietnamese and Mandarin programs continue to develop across the county.

(pause, music change)

Mijares: Parents and communities see the power of these programs, and really, they see the importance for their children's futures. In an increasingly global economy, language is proving to be a powerful asset, and students across the globe are leaving school having mastered 2, 3 and sometimes even 4 languages. Here's OCDE's Nicole Chavez again:

Nicole: So when we think about our nation and our state and our county embracing multi-literacy, what becomes possible for them in the global context is immense. When individuals are looking not only for employability, but in being able to solve global world problems, language is still a part of that. Being able to convince someone of an issue is going to require you to have, you know, the linguistic skills to get something across to them that might not be done in your primary language, but in theirs, because in the taking on of another language, we're also taking on another culture. We're taking on an empathetic perspective as to where our communities our coming from. So from an economic perspective, we know research has shown individuals that know more than one language, often times, economically, they're making more.

Mijares: As a nation, we actually have some catching up to do in this department. Anaida Colon-Muniz:

Anaida:...the whole world has already been on that wagon, and we're just sort of coming on. I think it's late, but it's never too late. I think it's an opportunity. But now we're saying everybody has that and should have that opportunity.

And in Spain, for example, their aim is for kids to be at least trilingual. So you know they start at three with two languages, and then by age eight they're already into the third language. So why wouldn't we explore that potential?

Mijares: Dual language programs not only have the power to create future opportunities for our students and nation in the global marketplace, but they have the power to change who we are as a society. There's one piece of the puzzle that was a constant in every conversation we had about bilingual education, it came up every single time, and while it's not really a part of the typical conversation on what dual language acquisition looks like, it is maybe one of the most powerful takeaways for students enrolled in these programs. Every professional and student we spoke to mentioned the importance of embracing multiculturalism as one of the most potentially transformative outcomes of their language programs. Again: Anaida Colon-Muniz...

Anaida: When you grow up in a classroom where you're being taught about diversity of languages and cultures, that's part of your cognitive ability, your consciousness. You being growing up knowing that there are these different languages. That provides you the opportunity to say, "You know what? I want to know more about this," or, "I want to know more about that." It gives children a much more sophisticated view of the world. It makes them more apt to explore, travel, to visit new places, to understand other cultures other people other ways of living in the world. I think it's an asset, and it's a wonderful resource to not only the state, but the nation.

Mijares: Magaly Rodriguez is the Dual Language Specialist for Anaheim Elementary School District...

Magaly: As a community, I think we're celebrating different cultures and even if you're not necessarily identifying with that culture, embarking more than just a culture you would think of in a country, but really, your community, your environment. What is it that you're interacting with music? And so forth. I think it's becoming more well known...and also our data is starting to speak for itself. Like, everything is helping ... Just the workforce, it's helping everything within their own community. And helping it grow as opposed to them to go elsewhere for that. So, in essence, it's just making Anaheim itself a better place to be. Culturally, linguistically, in the workforce, everything. It's just a better place.

Mijares: Shannon Villanueva tied all of this together through the mission of Westminster's Vietnamese/English program.

Shannon: The goals of our Dual Language Program are the three pillars of dual language. You know the high academic achievement, the biliteracy and the cultural competence. That is a really important piece for us and so, integrated into like let's say our social studies and language arts time they do bring in the Vietnamese culture and also some of the culture comes by virtue of teaching the language. But we do school-wide celebrations. And I feel very strongly about not having our dual program be a school within a school. I want it to be part of the fabric of who we are.

Mijares: To help support these initiatives, the State of California created a program to honor students who have successfully completed dual language programs. Nicole Chavez...

Nicole: So the State Seal of Biliteracy is something that students graduating from high school, that have essentially shown evidence of proficiency through their courses, through tests, and so forth ... really proclaims them as being biliterate. This is huge process of state, and high school graduates that obtain this get this actual seal on their diploma, it's really quite something to be proud of.

Mijares: I want to bring us back to Alyx from the beginning of our story, she missed out on the opportunity to get a bilingual education, but she understands what it would have meant.

Alyx: I think being biliteral is like a really awesome advantage. You would understand your grandparents. You would understand, like I don't know even know some dishes in Vietnamese and I eat them all the time because I live with my Gran, and she cooks things for me, but I don't know how to pronounce it, so there's like a really huge disconnect between generations in my family. And with bicultural, biliteral and all this, putting this in schooling would be like that division between generations wouldn't exist.

Mijares: It's a powerful concept, and the potential gains for our society are abundantly clear...Our students today are facing a fierce international market driven by more languages than English, and although English is center stage; students who augment their language skills by speaking multiple languages will increase their competitiveness, employability, social-emotional skills, and greater life success; thereby strengthening our bond to each other as Americans, both now and in the future. I want to leave you with the voices of some students who have completed or are still enrolled in the Dual Language program in Anaheim Elementary School district. We asked them to tell us about their experiences in school and why they think being multilingual and multiliterate is important; these students are the future of Orange County, and in many ways the world.

Natalie: You start to see connections between words and phrases. So, say you're taking the SAT and they want you to identify a root word. Well, you understand Spanish so you understand the Latin root that it comes from. And so as a result, you have a better control over both languages. In terms of family, I can say that I connect way better with my family now. And I understand where they come from. And I understand their story and their background. And so, I think it will really help me later on in my career. Also, because it will help me to connect to other people. And understand where they're coming from. And how it's not just the American point of view. It's all the point of views from all over the world.

Sean: It's not necessarily something that you're understanding right away. You know a lot of my peers came from Spanish-speaking homes and that was their first language. What's so nice about the program is you're dealing with people who have never spoken Spanish before and people who have

only spoken Spanish. So it was fun to be able to work with your classmates, work with the teachers, and just really kind of grow up together and ultimately learn. It was very important to have a group that you could trust and that you knew wouldn't be there to look at you and laugh. It was somebody, Every student had a guiding hand in their friends, which was amazing.

Noe: You get that sense of understanding of a different perspective, like whether it is from the perspective of Mexico or a different country, like China or Russia, knowing their culture, knowing the customs, it not just allows you to like better understand it, but also have a feeling of you know there's something special about each part of the world.

Natalie: It presents us with a new idea where you can be different. And you can learn to accept differences in people. And learn how to accept diversity throughout the world. So, it just makes you more open as a person. And I think the United States could benefit from that. Because it helps us connect as a country. Rather than become a melting pot where we're all one. We're more of a diverse society. It's not a melting pot, rather a fruit bowl.

Sean: I think it's everything. I don't think it's a door that's opening, I think you're essentially building the door, because that door wouldn't be there without the language. Personally it's had a huge impact on my life, whether it be from a music standpoint, because I'm a musician, or whether it be just in the ability to connect with family members of mine who live all across the world, or just situations that the language is needed and there's no longer that barrier, the language barrier. It's been an absolute positive for me and I'm very blessed that I was put in the program at an early age.

[Musical chimes – SFX: whoosh]

Mijares: Thanks for joining us for the Deeper Learning Podcast. We hope you've learned something about the innovative language programs here in Orange County, and the larger movement throughout California and the country, and we hope we were able to provide some inspiration and ideas about

where programs like these can take our local communities and maybe even spread to our larger national culture.

We'd love to hear your thoughts, you can reach us at communications@ocde.us. If you enjoyed this episode, please share it with a friend!

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We'll see you next time.

[Music up and out]

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