

What is Your Goal?: Creating Policy for Bilingual Education in California

Abstract

In this essay I consider two propositions from California -- Proposition 227 (1998) and Proposition 58 (2016). When Proposition 58 passed in 2016, it was lauded as a huge success for the state. It repealed Proposition 227, and it brought back bilingual education to the state of California. It was considered a progressive change since the campaign for Proposition 227 had notoriously attacked English Language Learners (ELLs)--particularly of Hispanic descent-- for not assimilating quickly enough and therefore posing a threat to American life. However, I argue that although Proposition 58 did not use a language that made ELLs into threats, it made them into assets. Proposition 58 came into existence out of a fear that American children were not being prepared to become leaders in a multilingual, multicultural world. To achieve this goal, supporters argued that in order for America to remain a powerful country, it needed to train its students in multiple languages. This Proposition made the ability to speak a language other than English into an asset that could be exploited for this objective. I argue that although bilingual education should always be available to all children, especially to ELLs, the campaign for Proposition 58 fails to address inequities inside and outside the classroom. Although some will argue that this frame justifies the ultimate goal of bringing bilingual education back, I argue that this framework does not treat non-English speakers as full humans and as equal members of the American fabric. If anything, there is nothing innovative about this project since the United States has other historical examples of using non-white people as assets when it pleased it with no true reforms for those who are disadvantaged and commodified. To make my argument I examine the texts of the Propositions, and speeches and ads made in their favor during and after their successful campaigns by key figures, and place these Propositions in their contexts alongside a longer history of the Spanish language in the U.S.

Introduction

California has been a contentious place for debates about language and its particular place when crafting issues of belonging. These debates have been waged through different lenses, from immigration to bilingual classrooms. In the past two decades the debate over English as a Second Language (ESL) or bilingual education methods has been a site of conflict in the state. ESL classrooms focus on teaching children English through an immersion program that prioritizes only English. On the other hand, bilingual classrooms focus on both teaching English and maintaining a strong tie to the children's native language (University of Texas of the Permian Basin). Although these debates happen all around the country, California is an

interesting place to look at for two reasons: its particular racial and ethnic demographics and its method to pass laws through ballot initiatives.

Demographics: California “had the highest concentration of ELLs [English Language Learners] in the United States, and nearly one-third of the country's districts with the largest ELL populations were found in [it].” Note that almost eighty percent of ELLs are native Spanish speakers (Institute of Education Sciences). Finally, most ELLs are U.S. citizens. This last fact becomes extremely important to remember since most policies that attack ELL students do so along the lines of citizenship.

Ballot Initiatives: Furthermore, even though it counts with a state government, many laws can become statues through propositions. The process is rather straightforward and rooted in a democratic ideal of “majority wins.” This method allows anyone to write an initiative and once it is approved by the Attorney General, the author must obtain a certain number of petitions from registered voters; then the proposition can be included in the ballot for *all* Californians to vote on it on election day (State of California Department of Justice). The debate over how to teach children who do not speak English in the state of California is best illustrated by two propositions--Proposition 227 (1998) and Proposition 58 (2016). When propositions pass, they do not only represent a new law in the state; they represent the voice of millions of Californians. They also represent the millions of dollars that were invested to collect signatures and sponsor them.

In this essay, I look at Proposition 227 (passed with 61 percent of the vote in 1998), and Proposition 58 (passed with 73 percent of the vote in 2016) which effectively repealed Proposition 227. This change has been lauded as progress by some authors (Katznelson and

Bernstein) because Proposition 227, which positioned English Language Learners (ELLs) as a threat to the country, kept ELLs from learning any other language but English. Many scholars agree that it represented a resurgence in nativist sentiment in the late 1990's. In contrast Proposition 58, which made ELLs into positive assets to the country, brought back bilingual education. I argue that despite this "progressive" shift, Proposition 227 and Proposition 58 both position the non-English speaker--particularly Hispanic children--as an outsider to the nation state. Proposition 58 saw these children as resources, useful to success under conditions of globalization so that "true Americans" could be well-equipped to maintain a strong, competitive, American edge at home and abroad. I argue that true progress in the field of education would seek to help these ELLs have access to multiple opportunities without capitulating to the rhetoric, albeit strategic, of promising them to a nationalist project. I argue that even if policies offer positive outcomes (e.g. reinstating bilingual education in the state) these could be undermined if the policy fails to address the historical context that gave way to and continues to uphold those inequalities in the first place.

Even though I will be focusing on educational policies, I am mostly concerned with the symbolic meaning of the Propositions mentioned above and their specific historical contexts. I am not concerned with the particular educational outcomes that come from said policies. Although much work has been done on the rhetoric and outcomes of Proposition 227 (see Daniel HoSang's *Racial Propositions*), very few scholars have paid attention to the language and political climate around Proposition 58 -- and if they have, they often claim it a success without reservations. In a particular case, authors Noah Katznelson and Katie Bernstein, have argued that it is worth it to employ a potentially problematic rhetorical strategy as long as positive

policy is the end result. I strongly disagree with this conclusion, because rhetorical strategies don't just reflect the way people think -- they shape and promote certain ways of thinking, too. I also argue that when we place a policy in its historical context, we view its motivations and implications more accurately than we would if we examine the language of the policy decision in isolation. To make my argument, I examine the political framing/political rhetoric and historical contexts of both Proposition 227 (1998) and Proposition 58 (2016) in the state of California with an emphasis on the latter since more research has already been done on Proposition 227. I do so by examining the texts of the Propositions, and speeches and ads made in their favor during and after their successful campaigns by key figures, and by placing these Propositions in their contexts alongside a longer history of the Spanish language in the U.S.

This capstone consists of two parts: The first examines both the rhetoric of 227 in relation to the construction of the "Latino Threat" and the historical context that gave rise to these specific concerns over the Spanish language. I provide a brief history of the Spanish language and its perception as un-American throughout the history of the country with draconian effects on non-English speakers. I start in the middle of the nineteenth century with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and the second-class citizenship status given to the "new Americans" who had joined the United States after the Mexican-American War. Then, I follow the English-Only movement that took place in the 1980s and I outline its legacies. Finally, I turn to the infamous Proposition 187 of 1994 in California and how its nativist aspirations reinforce the stigmatization against the Spanish language. It is this history that we must keep in mind when we examine Proposition 227, for it is but one moment in a much longer history of how the Spanish language has been understood and disciplined in the United States. Part two of this

capstone then examines both the rhetoric and the historical context of Proposition 58. Rather than suggesting that opinions regarding Latino students transformed because of moral progress or ethical transformations in society, I reveal how this transformation is attributed to America's political and economic needs in the globalized world. I argue that my analysis, which extends from Proposition 227 in 1998 to Proposition 58 in 2016, is a small but valuable window into the volatile and historically specific perceptions of minority students, race, language, and American identity.

PART I: PROPOSITION 227

Historical Context for Proposition 227: Language, Education and Belonging

In this section I contextualize the precarious position that Spanish has always occupied in the United States. Many have characterized the United States as the great melting pot. German sociologist of language Heinz Kloss has argued that "there was not much linguistic intolerance" throughout the history of the United States policy (Ovando, pg. 3). Nevertheless, there is another branch of literature that has focused on disproving this. Harold F. Schiffman directly attacks Kloss' assertions and argues that although there was a time in the early days of the American Revolution where tolerance for other languages like German, French and Dutch was common, "recent policies have restricted the use of languages other than English to the most private domains where they are 'non-threatening to Anglo-Americans.'" Schiffman and many others have gone one step further in arguing that these cases of intolerance grew stronger against linguistic minorities.

Since my project focuses on the United States specifically, I believe it is important to note that although the United States does not have an official, established language, English has become synonym of “American.” Language has always been attached to race, ethnicity, and citizenship. Authors like Carlos J. Ovando have emphasized that since the United States does not have an official language, its perceptions of English and other languages have varied incredibly due to political waves (Ovando, pg. 14).

Linguists have long recognized the connection between citizenship and language. Citizenship is not only connected to where you are born and to speaking the standard language. There is a constant process of border-making around language utilizing the constructs of race, class and citizenship to signal to others where each of us belongs (Valdés, 2017, 325). Furthermore, English in particular has come to be understood as the “world language” so historians have noted how as the United States has risen to prominence in the global scene so has the importance of English. This followed a history of the United Kingdom as one of the greatest empires of the last few centuries (Extra, pg. 190-191). This perception, according to historians, means that the United States felt embolden to launch forward the English language while asking others to leave behind their native tongues.

It should be evident at this moment that the place of bilingualism has a contested place in our society. These perceptions have been affected by immigration patterns, wars, the economy and research. In the next section I want to focus on the Southwest since its relations to Mexico have always affected immigration and language patterns in this part of the country which includes the state of California.

Spanish as a (Useful) Second Class Citizen

The United States is quick to point out that it is one of the few countries in the world that does not have an official language. In fact, it is one of eight in this category (Lozano, 2018). Nevertheless, the Spanish language has always had a place in the American continents. It was there since the Spanish conquistadores decided to colonize the many indigenous civilizations across the terrain. It continues to be the language of most of the countries in these two continents. In the American imaginary, however, Spanish has always been attached to foreigners, particularly to Mexicans. In her book--*An American Language*--Rosina Lozano describes the origins of this concept.

The Mexican-American War of 1848 ended with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. This Treaty was created after American forces took the capital--Mexico City. The key outcome was that Mexico officially ceded Texas, California, parts of New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada, and Utah, Wyoming and Colorado. Furthermore, the Treaty allowed Mexicans in these areas to decide whether or not they wanted to retain their Mexican citizenship (which meant relocating to official Mexican territory) or to receive "all rights and privileges as citizens" by remaining in their homes (Lozano, 90). Many people who had been considered Mexican citizens chose to become American citizens. They nevertheless continued to speak only Spanish. Suddenly, although these people or these "treaty citizens" (Lozano, 2018) were considered American citizens, their citizenship found limits when it converged with the Spanish language (pg. 91). Anglos already dominated the world of politics in the new states in the Southwest. "In the last decades of the nineteenth century, Anglos narrowed their understanding of language and citizenship" (Lozano, 2018). As the decades progressed, Anglos became more and more intolerant of the Spanish language and with the new century new waves of Mexican migrant

laborers arrived to the Southwest. For example, in the state of California in 1880, a “law required to all election officers to be able to read, write, and speak the English language understandingly” (pg. 94). These waves of immigrants “helped solidify in many Anglo minds a view of Spanish speakers as noncitizens” (Lozano, 2018). In extreme cases, Anglos used the immigration system to reinforce this division through deportations (pg. 143). This close connection between language and citizenship, between English and “Americanness” grew only more salient.

Despite these disadvantages that the Spanish-speaking people faced in the United States, they continued to exist and fight for their rights as citizens. As Rosina Lozano explains in her book this group of people fought for the right to receive instruction not only in Spanish but also *of* Spanish (Mexican) culture in the United States (pg. 137). Their exclusion from most of the English-speaking population allowed them to create strong ties to other Spanish speaking people, particularly along Mexican heritage. This new shift symbolized a new fight.

Nevertheless, this new fight encountered a new nativist attack. The English Only Movement.

Before I move into this movement, I would like to highlight the point that the Spanish language relationship to American citizenship has always depended on politics and other inconsistent forces. For example, Lozano writes: “War can often lead to a criminalization of difference, but World War II had the opposite effect on the federal government’s approach to the Spanish language. The federal government’s interest in promoting Spanish and supporting Spanish speakers peaked during the war” (pg. 212). Even though the United States and the other Allied Nations fought against the fast-spreading xenophobia of Nazi Germany, the United States still faced issues of intolerance and racism back at home (pg. 213). Nevertheless, the

United States government sought to diminish these acts because it needed allies in Latin America to promote a unified hemispheric front against the Axis powers, and because it needed to recruit cheap labor within its borders at a time when many American men were fighting the war overseas. In California, for example, the government focused on “integrating ethnic Mexicans into American life and on ensuring their support for the war effort” (pg. 226). The government recruited ethnic Mexicans and other Spanish speakers to reach Spanish-speaking communities in the Southwest. These activists received funding for bringing in the “Southwest’s assets, which included the Spanish language” (pg. 212). However, as it is to be expected, this federal support dwindled when the war effort ended in 1945 (pg. 230). Though enthusiasm for Spanish speakers and for U.S.-Latin American friendship regressed after World War II, this historical moment foreshadows the ways that the U.S. will embrace certain aspects of “foreignness” when it is perceived as a benefit to the national interest.

The English-Only Movement

The English-Only movement in the state of California is often considered to have started in the 1980s. Most prominently, Proposition 63 of 1986 declared English as the official language of the state of California. Although this Proposition had no real effect on policy, that mattered little to the main proponents. They wanted to establish a platform to further their agenda. As Daniel HoSang claims in his book, *Racial Propositions*, this proposition was about more than a nativist sentiment wanting to limit access to rights and resources; it was about putting conditions on how these resources could be accessed (HoSang, 2010, pg. 131). During the debate for Proposition 63, proponents “represented those whose primary language was not English—always immigrants from Mexico, Latin America, and Asia—as having a disability and

problem that official English legislation sought to cure” (pg. 148). Furthermore, the Proposition 63 supporters argued that “English alone was the language of enterprise, education, and, most importantly, progress” (pg. 148). Finally, but definitely not less importantly, the entire debate was surrounded by concerns that those whose primary language was not English (see above) were not fit to be citizens. They needed to prove that they were fit for citizenship; they needed to prove it to those who were clearly deserving of citizenship (“native born, dutiful citizens who worked hard, spoke English, and paid taxes”) (HoSang, `2010). This anti-immigrant and anti-Spanish proposition governed the political space in California for decades and eventually manifested themselves into Proposition 187 in 1994.

Proposition 187 or Save Our State Initiative

Now, I would like to direct your attention at Proposition 187 or the Save Our State (SOS) initiative of 1994. Californians passed Proposition 187 with 60 percent of the vote (1.5 million votes). At the time, California was experiencing an extreme economic recession. “California lost more than one million jobs, fueled by the rapid decline of the aerospace and military technology sectors, and suffered its worst economic recession since the Great Depression” (HoSang, 2014, pg. 62)

This Proposition used an anti-immigrant rhetoric that sought to keep all undocumented people from accessing public services. One of these public services was public education. In fact, schools were asked to verify the immigration status of their students. Proposition 187, although overturned a year later, framed undocumented people—especially Hispanic people—as a drain on resources. Overall, this Proposition sent a panic through the Hispanic community because any indicators of “illegality” could potentially result in deportation since traffic officers

and even teachers could report those they suspected of being undocumented to immigration authorities. These indicators often included racial profiling and a ban on the Spanish language. Through Proposition 187 (Hispanic) immigrants were placed against American ideals. Even the opposition could not do much about this problem. As HoSang argues in his book, the “innocent taxpayers” and the “criminal immigrants” were assumed to be a fixed part of the political landscape. They were in clear opposition.

Those who fought against Proposition 187 were unable to shake this relationship. They argued against the proposition on its ability to round up undocumented immigrants (effectiveness) and not on its draconian and unjustified tactics (Huerta, 1995). The American political imagination associated (again) speaking Spanish with “illegality.” Although a law in California that affects ELLs could affect a myriad of ethnicities and races, the issue of bilingual education mostly affects children of Hispanic heritage.

California Proposition 227 (1998) or “English for The Children Initiative”

Proposition 227 passed in 1998 in California, and it received a 61 percent of the votes (HoSang, 2010, pg. 239). As I have noted in previous sections, the history preceding Proposition 227 or the “English for the Children” Initiative (ECI) was highly contentious, with Spanish-speaking people and Hispanic immigrants often depicted as the antithesis to pure American ideals. In terms of policy, the Proposition virtually eliminated bilingual education programs in the state and reduced them to a one-year program taught in English (BallotPedia, “Proposition 227”).

The author of Proposition 227 was Ron Unz. He was a successful businessman from Silicon Valley who ran for governor of California in the GOP primary of 1994. He was a strong conservative voice for the state, even though he opposed Proposition 187 (1994) because he believed that this could drive Hispanics and Asians into the democratic party (HoSang, 2010, pg. 232). When he started to work on the campaign for Proposition 227, he enlisted few prominent Latino figures in education to support his campaign. He understood that by promoting anti-bilingual (English-Only) measures, his campaign could be perceived as anti-Hispanic, so he sought to distance himself from these preconceptions from the beginning (HoSang, pg. 233). Nevertheless, his “pro-Hispanic” efforts pitted the bilingual education programs in the state of California against the taxpayers, the English language, and American culture as a whole through several strategies (Miller, pg. 48).

First, Ron Unz used conservative, anti-immigrant financial backers for his campaign. Kathryn Miller discovered that even though Unz claimed to be helping Hispanic ELLs, he relied on financial backers who were wealthy, white, English-speaking men, self-identified conservatives and who had supported immigration restrictions in the past (Miller, pg. 48). Unz’s financial resources suggested that these children’s mastery of English was not a priority, but rather their conversion into assimilable subjects.

Secondly, Unz framed bilingual education as a massive, expensive disaster that was failing English Language Learners (ELLs). The process of framing bilingual education as a clear failure accomplished three things; it did not prioritize the bilingualism of these ELLs, but only their English achievement, and it, as HoSang argues, placed bilingual education as a direct bureaucratic enemy of the immigrant children and the American taxpayers (pg. 234).

Furthermore, Unz also framed ELLs as unable to overcome their deficiency (not speaking English). Unz argued that bilingual education was a failed bureaucracy that allowed those who were falling behind to not work to become better. In this case, “better” was synonymous with English-speaking American society. In other words, bilingual education became anti-American since it kept children from achieving the American Dream and again, wasted taxpayers’ money (HoSang, 2010, pg. 234).

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Unz framed Proposition 227 as “pro-immigrant” since he argued he was defending children’s rights to learn English (HoSang, pg. 234-242). Although I have touched on this specific framing in the previous points, one key framing outcome was that to be an ELL meant to be non-American—it meant to be an immigrant, always. This framing ignored the fact that “California in particular has a considerably large Spanish-speaking population that consists of immigrants and natural-born citizens alike” (Miller, pg. 47). In fact, a Census Bureau’s 2016 American Community Survey confirmed that “only 23 percent of limited English proficiency students ages 5 to 17 are not U.S. citizens” (Bialik). Once again, this framing automatically places a distance between Spanish speakers and American citizenship. The fact that they do not speak English removes their right to be seen as American citizens. These four arguments show how the Proposition 227 campaign of 1998 pitted the bilingual education in the state of California against the taxpayers, the English language, and American culture as a whole.

As shown above, the literature surrounding Proposition 227 focuses on how Unz pitted ELLs against American values. Nevertheless, since Proposition 58 was only passed two years ago (2016), most of this literature does not engage on how the tactics used in Proposition 227 have

been abandoned or reinvented. Before I turn to this development brought by Proposition 58, I want to argue that Proposition 227 its framing by Ron Unz do not only attack bilingual education, but in fact, they also frame ELLs of Hispanic heritage as a threat to the United States. To dissect this argument, I look at the Latino threat Narrative as outlined by Leo R. Chavez in his book *The Latino Threat*.

The Latino Threat

Leo R. Chavez describes the “Latino Threat Narrative” as such:

The Latino Threat Narrative posits that Latinos are not like previous immigrant groups, who ultimately became part of the nation. According to the assumptions and taken-for-granted “truths” inherent in this narrative, Latinos are unwilling or incapable of integrating, of becoming part of the national community. Rather, they are part of an invading force from south of the border that is bent on reconquering land that was formerly theirs and destroying the American way of life. Although Mexicans are often the focus of the Latino Threat Narrative, public discourse...often includes immigration from Latin America in general, as well as U.S. born Americans of Latin American descent (*The Latino Threat*. Pg. 3).

Through this narrative, the Latino becomes a danger to the American way of life. Based on the definition given above, I will unpack how Proposition 227 reinforces this narrative effectively making the Hispanic ELL not only not American but also a threat that must be neutralized.

1. *“Latinos are not like other waves of immigrants--unwilling to integrate!”*

This section of the narrative automatically yet subtly argues that Latinos are unwilling to uphold American ideals unlike their European counterparts. Samuel P. Huntington, chairman of the Harvard Academy for International and Area Studies and cofounder of Foreign Policy argued in the same: “[h]istorically, millions of immigrants were attracted to the United States because of [the] culture and the economic opportunities and political liberties it made possible” (Huntington). He argues that the U.S. culture was built on an Anglo-Protestant culture [with] key elements [that] include the English language; Christianity; religious commitment...” and

that “overwhelmingly white, British, and Protestant” immigrants espoused these values in the 17th and 18th centuries. Even when in the 19th century new waves of European immigrants started to enter the country (e.g. Germans and Irish), they still decided to adopt these values. Huntington argues that Latinos, especially of Mexican heritage, did not. In his article Huntington argued that “the single most immediate and most serious challenge to America’s traditional identity comes from the immense and continuing immigration from Latin America, especially from Mexico.” Unlike Hispanic immigrants, European immigrants are seen as groups who integrated into American society seamlessly. Hispanics represent a threat to America while European immigrants are seen as grateful contributors.

In his book, Chavez quantitatively and qualitatively establishes that with each generation of Latinos in the United States Latinos seamlessly integrate into society through marriage, attaining higher levels of education, home ownership, socioeconomic status, and exchanging Spanish for English (Chavez, pg. 56-59). Proposition 227, which came out in 1998, was proposed under the notion that Latinos needed to be forcefully assimilated and that otherwise, they could present a threat to Anglo-Protestant visions of America. Ron Unz believed that the government needed to take immediate action.

The campaign for Proposition 227 reinforced the belief that bilingual education was a massive national and state-wide failure. It wasted millions of dollars every year, Unz argued, and it “coddled and nurtured those who were falling behind rather than demanding that they labor to overcome their own deficiencies” (HoSang, 2010, pg. 324). In other words, ELLs were lazy, entitled children who refused to learn English.

Furthermore, as established in the previous section, the campaign established the ELLs as inherently non-American even though the majority of them possess American citizenship. In fact, an important part of the Latino Threat Narrative is creating the illusion that a Latino heritage automatically separates one from American citizenship. According to Chavez, U.S. - born Latinos are seen as “‘alien-citizens,’ perpetual foreigners despite their birthright” (Chavez, pg. 7). The citizenship rights of American ELLs are automatically contested and in order to be welcomed into it, they must prove their patriotism by learning English. In other words, the campaign for Proposition 227 framed the issue as immigrants refusing to integrate while circumventing the fact that there are Americans who do not speak English. This distinction reinforces the idea that Latinos are a problem for “real Americans” to solve, and again, making them a threat.

2) Instead of trying to integrate, Latino children are trying to take over!

Although the Proposition 227 campaign sought to establish itself as a benevolent institution toward Latinos and ELLs, the campaign's biggest contributors were closely tied to organizations that “expressed hostility toward immigrants and a perceived threat that increasing numbers of unauthorized immigrants pose to the status quo and the established racial hierarchy” (Miller, pg. 55). It is outstanding that there was always the underlying perception that to help ELLs (who were also perceived as immigrants) meant to assimilate them so as to keep them from destabilizing Americans’ way of life.

These manifestations of the Latino Threat Narrative in the Proposition 227 campaign of 1998 help us demonstrate that Latinos are very much seen as a force that must be subdued, assimilated and placated. Nevertheless, if this is so, how do we make sense of Proposition 58,

which arrived to the State of California in 2016 and reinstated bilingual education once again in the state? Does this mean that by 2016 there had been a major transformation in which Latinos are now simply accepted and encouraged to learn their native tongue and English as well without reservations? Does this simply mean that after the disaster of the late 1990s that we have learned the mistakes of taking away bilingual education? I argue that unfortunately, we cannot simply draw these conclusions, however appealing they may be. The truth is, as the next section argues, that Latino students were still placed in a position subordinate to the needs of the nation-state.

PART II: PROPOSITION 58

Context for California Proposition 58 (2016) or “California Education for a Global Economy Initiative”

In 2016, a new proposition was passed in the state of California that effectively replaced Proposition 227: Proposition 58 or “California Education for a Global Economy” Initiative. The Proposition passed with 73 percent of the vote (BallotPedia, “Proposition 58”). It reinstated bilingual education in the state once again. Unlike Proposition 227 (1998), this Proposition was introduced by a senator (Sen. Ricardo Lara) to the state legislature. After it was approved by the state senate, it was added to the ballot so voters could decide its fate. The Proposition was written by Sen. Ricardo Lara, D-Bell Gardens, a young senator of Hispanic heritage.

Before addressing my critiques of Proposition 58 (2016), I want to make perfectly clear that they do not signify an opposition to the fact that this Proposition brought back bilingual education to many English language learners who need it. Many people agree that this policy is indeed a great success. In anything, it represents a shift in political rhetoric from the one we

saw being used in Proposition 227 in 1998. Unfortunately, although the political rhetoric surrounding it demonstrated a departure from the Latino Threat Narrative that we analyzed in the previous section, Proposition 58 displayed other concerns for this writer. It ignored the history between race, language, immigration and citizenship which I noted in Part I of this essay. It also reduced non-English speakers to “buckets of resources” for English-only speakers so they could advance in a globalized world and pull California and the United States with them. Finally, these two processes reflect an American tradition to use those seen as “outsiders” for the benefits of the “insiders” regardless of the cost paid by those on the outside. To contextualize my argument, I will first focus on some of the events between Proposition 227 (1998) and Proposition 58 (2016) that explain the change in rhetoric we see between the two of them.

Contextualizing Proposition 58

In the following three sections I draw attention to two key phenomenon that I believe explain why the rhetoric of Proposition 58 was so appealing in 2016.

9/11: A Nation Lost in a Globalized World

The terrorist attacks of September 1, 2001 seemed to tell every American citizen that the country was vulnerable. Their position as a “military and economic giant” (Strategic Task Force on Education Abroad, pg. ii) was not enough to keep the country from being attacked. This tragedy seemed to ask the government to do more to maintain the safety of its citizens. In this vacuum, where economic and military force became insufficient to defend the country, the government sought ways to make sure that Americans could still remain leaders in an ever-

globalizing world. How to prepare Americans to face the challenges of this new world? One of the avenues for this new mission was found in education.

The National Association of Foreign Student Educators (NAFSA) is a non-profit organization headquartered in Washington, D. C. Their mission states:

NAFSA believes that international education advances learning and scholarship, fosters understanding and respect among people of diverse backgrounds and perspectives, is essential for developing globally competent individuals, and builds leadership for the global community. We believe that international education lies at the core of an interconnected world characterized by peace, security, and well-being for all” (NAFSA).

In accordance with its mission, in 2003, the organization released a report that named a particular crisis: “America’s ignorance of the world is now a national liability” (pg. iv). The problem was not hatred abroad but ignorance at home. The report made the case for a national--federal and state governments, the president, institutions of higher education, the private sector--call to arms. The United States needed to push American college students to “devote a substantive portion of their education to gaining an understanding of other countries, regions, languages, and cultures, through direct personal experience” (pg. iv).

The report went further and diagnosed that this problem was rooted in taking pride in isolationists practices and in considering speaking only English a “point of national pride” (pg. 1). NAFSA believed that a *secure and prosperous* nation could not exist in the new era of globalization without efforts like these. In other words, “globalization is a threat to the United States largely because American citizens do not know how to succeed in a globalized world” because of its own actions (Talya Zemach-Bersin, pg. 91).

Another report (2005) from the same organization created more concrete goals, and it demanded the government to send one million students to study abroad annually in a decade

(Commission on the Abraham Lincoln Study Abroad Fellowship Program, pg. v). At first glance these programs may seem to be simply promoting educational opportunities for all students. In fact, the NAFSA report of 2003 made it explicit that the study abroad effort needed to include non-traditional students (see below). However, Zemach-Bersin argues that do so would “reproduce, and not challenge, the violences of empire and inequality” under the veil of promoting a “more just and communicative world” (Pg. 90).

Although Proposition 58 did not create a study abroad program or promote international education more generally, the campaign was deeply affected by these feelings of anxiety/excitement (Zemach-Bersin, pg. 91) around globalization. This NAFSA campaign also tried to attract supporters by calling on American exceptionalism for world leadership (Commission on The Abraham Lincoln Study Abroad Fellowship Program, pg. 8). Building on these arguments, Proposition 58 was particularly successful by accentuating and promoting American exceptionalism in economics.

Growth of the California Economy

Recall that in 1994, Proposition 187 passed with over 1.5 million of voters. This proposition became part of the ballot when California was experiencing a disastrous recession. While some scholars have argued that Proposition 187 is the conclusion of “cyclical nativism” (Alvarez & Butterfield), others disagree and argue that such successful campaign needed more work than simply “a new wave of racism” (HoSang, 2014). Regardless of the argument, most scholars agree that the economic downturn in the early 1990s certainly facilitated the scapegoating of undocumented immigrants. Contrary to this event, California’s economy has been extremely strong in the past two decades.

Since 1998 California has constantly reported a strong economy. Its strength is so admirable that it is compared to the economy of other countries (see below) and not to other states. Still, I am hesitant, as many scholars are, to claim that a booming economy means that those considered as “outsiders” should feel safe. As we will see below, a booming economy did not keep policymakers from selling these “outsiders” as instruments for those they deemed “Americans.”

More and Better Science

Furthermore, literature on bilingual education in the past few decades has focused on the benefits of having robust and extensive bilingual education due to policies normally limiting the access to bilingual education in the first place. Psychologists (Bialystok), cognitive scientists (Hsin and Snow), and even economists have argued in favor of bilingual education (Green). They have asserted that bilingualism has outstanding advantages on education, language acquisition, writing and could even help people combat Alzheimer’s (Bialystok). This research and the overall common knowledge that knowing more than one language is “good for you” was used to aid the campaign for Proposition 58. Very limited research existed on this topic when Proposition 227 was put in the ballot in 1998 (although researchers certainly claimed its benefits).

Proposition 58 (2016) or “California Education for a Global Economy Initiative”

As mentioned above, Proposition 58 passed in 2016 with 73 percent of the vote (9,994,454 votes) (Ballotpedia, Proposition 58). The Proposition was written by Democrat

Senator Ricardo Lara. He was raised in East Los Angeles. Both of his parents are Mexican immigrants. He made history in 2012 by becoming the first openly gay person of color elected to the California Senate. He has had several victories in different areas. In education, he authored Proposition 58 and “first-of-its-kind legislation known as the California DREAM Loan Program which offers low-interest loans to University of California and California State University students to reach their higher education goals” (Senate District 33). Proposition 58 brought back bilingual education, which had been virtually taken away by Proposition 227 in 1998. In this final section of the paper I will analyze how the campaign for “Prop 58” was presented to the voters. I will look at the speeches made in favor of the Proposition and ads released by the campaign. I will pay particular attention to the launching speech that Senator Lara offered in 2014 since I believe it shows the commitments of the campaign from the beginning.

Ricardo Lara launched the campaign for Proposition 58 during his visit at West Portal Elementary School in San Francisco on April 17, 2014 (California Senate Democrats). I was able to retrieve video of this. The interview starts off with him saying:

Senator Lara: [00:00] *So we are here today to unveil a critical bill that is [going to] allow our Californian workforce to continue to produce multilingual, multiliterate students to help us out advance our goals to create a global workforce from California. And ensure that California continues to be competitive and be the 8th largest economy in the world. The way we are gonna do that today is by asking voters in the 2016 election to revisit [Proposition] 227 from 1998 which really limits the ability for public schools to offer dual immersion or multilingual immersion programs at the public-school level. I think it is time for us to have this conversation again and revisit [it] given that the popularity of dual immersion programs continues to increase. I think Californians know and value the importance of being...their students being multilingual, bilingual and multiliterate given that every science out there indicates that students are not only able to be better at school, be better at being able to decipher more complex ideas and they are able to be better students. I think you are here at a model school [West Portal Elementary School in San Francisco] that continues to lead the way and lead the state in terms of these programs and I think it is time for us to revisit this and I am very confident the voters in California will be able to*

understand and hopefully repeal prop 227 and allow us to continue to build a global workforce for California.[01:35] [omitted description of how to get the initiative on the ballot]

[02:15] **A member of the press asked:** *Can you talk more about the barriers of [Proposition] 227?*

Senator Lara: *Absolutely. Currently under Prop 227 there are all these different triggers that really decentivize parents tout their kids in these dual-immersion programs. There is an annual waiver that the parents have to fill out then at that time they are given a bunch of other options instead of these dual immersion programs. So, it really creates a disincentive. The other things that we are repealing is the liability clause. That hold teachers and schools liable if the student does not learn English. So what we are doing is removing that because that is also another barrier... we have also seen that this liability clause incentivizes these schools to become charter schools to be able to create and promote these dual immersion programs. So, it is really discentivizing our public schools from doing this. We are removing those barriers and ensuring that we can continue to have these dynamic programs in the state. [03: 11]*

Another member of the press: *Even though attitudes have changed This has the potential of getting into the whole immigration debate, which is very complex...*

Senator Lara: *Well, not necessarily. This issue is not about bilingual education. This is not about immigrant students. This is about every California student, ensuring that every student here in California has an opportunity, if their parents choose to, to put them in a multilingual dual program. I think parents understand now understand the importance of that and so that is how we kind of frame this issue in terms of multilingual, multiliteracy, multicultural effort that moves us away from bilingual education because quite honestly the bilingual education from ten years ago is not the same bilingual education we have now. Pedagogy has changed. Strategies have changed. One of the key aspects of that is being able to on the students' formative years to really inculcate various languages so they can master all the languages. Not just one language similar to what they are doing in Europe and Asia and around the world. [04:16]*

After the reporters speak to Senator Lara, the video cuts to a press conference in front of the school. Educators, students and even the mother of some students come up to the microphone to talk about their experiences with dual immersion programs at the school.

I argue that the campaign for Proposition 58 decided to focus on an all-encompassing language to circumvent truly progressive discussions of race, immigration, ethnicity, language and even citizenship. It discussed "language skills" as opposed to language speakers and simply sought to transfer these skills to "all children" so they could become capable leaders in a

globalized world. By using a “neutral” language of multiculturalism, this campaign ignored true discussions about whom needed access to bilingual education the most.

In the public sphere, Proposition 58 is often lauded as a great success. After all, it brought back bilingual education--the very thing that Proposition 227 sought to eliminate since 1998. For this reason, these two Propositions are often positioned as complete opposites. One, seeking to attack ELLs while other was determined to bring back public services for them. At minute 02:15 of the transcribed interview, Senator Lara explains the key differences between Proposition 227 and Proposition 58. It is clear to him that his Proposition helps public schools, and offers more choices for parents and students. This would indicate a “direct opposite” relationship between the two. However, when he is later asked about his Proposition spurring the debate over immigration again, he quickly retorts that this will not be the case. He is very quick to claim that his Proposition seeks to help *all* Californians [03:11]. He even confesses that his party was very careful about their framing to avoid this specific issue. Through this framing, although Proposition 58 is necessary to repeal Proposition 227, it becomes clear that it is also there to create a new vocabulary around which bilingualism is discussed. Senator Lara sought to repeal the language of race and ethnicity, citizenship and immigration from this discussion. This tactic, while possibly politically savvy, helps his campaign attack Proposition 227 without addressing the debate that led to Proposition 227 being passed. Making this correction in the discourse is important because it allows the audience understand that Proposition 58 never proposed to confront or rectify racism, nativism, and these racial and ethnic disparities.

The California Senate Democrats created a piece of policy that would bring bilingual education to all the children in the state of California. In order to do so, the new law proposed

to include a demographic that had not been seen before: English-only speakers. Per the historical context I provided for Proposition 227 in Part I, there was a clear division surrounding issues of bilingual education. Bilingual education was there for non-Americans, and this futile service only cost American taxpayers millions of dollars. In other words, bilingual education had no currency for American citizens.

Proposition 58, in light of a globalized world, argued that now, more than ever, English-only speakers had to catch up to their international counterparts. Not only that, but the text of the initiative argued that “multilingual skills are necessary for our country’s national security and essential to conducting diplomacy and international programs” (Senate Bill No. 1174 Text. pg. 4). In order to become competitive leaders in the world of the future and to serve to the protection of their country, these English-only speakers needed to take advantage of the fact that “California has a natural reserve of the world’s largest languages including English, Mandarin, and Spanish, which are critical to the State’s economic trade and diplomatic efforts” (Senate Bill No. 1174 Text. pg. 4). These diplomatic goals were placed on the hands of Californians--Americans. non-English speakers were seen as resources with skills that they needed to share with their English-speaking counterparts. For the brief quote above, one could argue that even English, like the rest of the languages, was seen as a natural resource in the state of California. However, the same text often cited English importance in the spheres of technology and science--clearly establishing a hierarchy of knowledge among these languages and therefore their native speakers. This language urged status quo Americans to adapt to a fast-paced world with porous borders by taking advantage of the “natural resources” within the state.

For example, in this brief interview Lara and the rest of the speakers during the conference proclaimed “dual-immersion programs” as the holy grail to achieve a multicultural and multilingual world. These programs simply put children who speak two different languages in a classroom with a teacher who speaks both. In theory, these programs allow children to learn from one another until both groups become fluent in both (Steele, et. al.). However, scholars have argued that even this approach can easily fail at providing equal opportunities to both groups of children. According to Valdés (1997) these programs “must serve both the needs of minority language speakers—whose primary objective is access to the curriculum and equal educational opportunity—as well as the desires of majority group members, and in particular, of their parents—whose primary objective may be gaining an economic edge for their children” (Katznelson).

The two strategies--to ignore the historical links between race, ethnicity, immigration and bilingual education, and to treat non-English speakers as natural resources for American representatives in a globalized world--represent not an academic pursuit equity, justice, and inclusion, but a national security, foreign policy, and diplomatic effort to encourage the ever-growing economy of the state in a globalized world.

Why Use This Strategy?

Now, as mentioned briefly, Senator Lara, the author of the initiative, has accomplished very progressive victories as a senator. This background, albeit brief, allows us to perhaps not believe that he meant to create this initiative with the intention to prioritize a narrative that would simply see ELLs as simple resources ready to be put to work. This logic begs the question: Why would he use this strategy then as opposed to one that addresses the historical

background of bilingual education and makes clear policy that helps ELLs (those who were the most affected by Proposition 227? It turns out that this tactic is heavily supported by scholarly work.

Now I turn to the work of Richard Ruiz on “language planning orientations” to understand different strategies that can be used to advocate for the preservation of a language, especially a minority language. His works diagnoses three possible frames available. The first is language as problem orientation. This first option asserts that that “(non-English) languages are barriers to social integration and are linked to other problematic social conditions, such as poverty and low academic achievement” (Katznelson, pg. 14). The second frame, language as right orientation, “views language as a human and civil right, and is associated with fighting for those rights” (Katznelson, pg. 14). Finally, the third frame, language as resource orientation, “sees language as benefitting both speakers and society, and thus, as something to be cultivated and preserved” (Katznelson, pg. 14). Ruiz promoted a language as resource orientation as the best avenue “to reshape attitudes about language and language groups” (p. 27). This framework could “ease tensions between majority and minority communities” (p. 25). Ruiz’s work demonstrates that the connection between the promotion of minority languages and economic pursuits is not accidental.

Furthermore, as Katznelson and Bernstein have shown, Proposition 58’s campaign was extremely successful. In fact, it was so successful that even people who voted for President Donald Trump in the state of California also supported the Proposition. In fact, a million people who voted for Trump also voted for Proposition 58 (pg. 1). This is impressive given that some scholars (Huddy and Sears) have found that “opposition [toward bilingual education] is greatest

among those who have generally negative attitudes toward minority groups and immigrants and who oppose special favors for them and among those who oppose increased government spending and spending on foreign-language instruction” (pg. 1). However, it becomes easy to understand when we discover that “opposition is also likely to increase if bilingual education is presented as promoting linguistic and cultural maintenance among language-minority students rather than as a mechanism for teaching English” (pg. 1). If you recall, Proposition 58 actually focused on learning multiple languages--multilingualism which also means that the students would not be encouraged to take “one flag” other than the American flag when they encountered international people in the future workforce.

Conclusion: Why is it Dangerous?

Despite Proposition 58’s success in 2016 there are several things to consider about where non-English speakers fit into this new narrative. I have argued in this essay that they do not really fit in to the national landscape as full people in the rhetoric of Proposition 58. A law that seeks to bring new opportunities regardless of race, ethnicity or income, may bring improvements to the life of Latinos, but it will not address the underlying issues that will continue to affect people disproportionately on the basis of race, ethnicity or income. While I share most of the concerns that Katznelson and Bernstein share in their article such as dual immersion programs may not help all students equally, these two writers end their article on a rather hopeful note. After all, they argue, rhetoric does not dictate what will in fact occur. They conclude with:

Our position is therefore that the means used to market Proposition 58—that is, neoliberal ideology—need not determine the ends. We are cautiously optimistic that the questions of *what kind* of resource language is, *for whom* it is a resource, and *to what end* that resource is used may be asked and answered anew in each context where multilingual education is once again permitted. As [Holborow \(2012\)](#) has pointed out, the outcomes of neoliberal ideology—like

global English teaching or, in our case here, dual language programs—are not the same as neoliberalism itself. Those outcomes can of course become tools to perpetuate neoliberalism, but they can also become tools of resistance against it (Hsu, 2015, López, 2015) (pg. 21)

The authors' reasons for why they must be cautious are, in my opinion, reason enough to argue for better framing from policymakers. Rather than hoping for the best, why not seek a way to talk about and understand the policy and educational needs of Spanish speaking students in a way that does not perpetuate harm?

I draw your attention at the fact that a) since the campaign was so interested in garnering support from middle-class white people across the state, it ignored questions of funding (especially to help ELLs in poor neighborhoods). The campaign, in attempting to erase the connections in the debate for bilingualism between ethnicity/race and questions of belonging, makes ELLs into commodities that happen to be useful in this globalized period so Americans can continue to have a strong economy. This method, however, has never truly served those who are the most disadvantaged. Multilingualism may support the needs of global capitalism and national security, but doing so does not bring about a more just and equal world for marginalized people.

In Part I, I focused on the precarious place that the Spanish language has always received in the country. I drew your attention to a period during WWII where Spanish was “Rediscovered by the U.S. government” (Lozano, pg. 230). The United States wanted cheap labor during the war effort and also allies in Latin America to protect against the Axis threat. To get this, the United States announced the “Good Neighbor” policy, promoted a Latin American craze in popular culture, and even passed laws to make discrimination against ethnic Mexicans illegal. However, the enforcement of these laws was contingent on Hispanic bodies being useful

as workers and political and military allies. Any support given to these people from the U.S. government was bought with the commodifying of their beings. Yet when the political situation shifted, as we know, Latinos in America found themselves on no more equal footing. This history, I argue, has much in common with Proposition 58 today. This dynamic could be repeated in the future once again if communities in need--like English Language Learners--are only given something they need when politicians identify in them whatever middle-class Americans happen to find useful or necessary for geopolitical and economic power at that moment in time. Such tactics to social change and racial and ethnic equality are destined to fail. As a group, Spanish speakers should be thought of as neither a threat to the nation-state or a commodifiable tool for achieving U.S. global power. Equality and justice demand that we be treated as fully human, complex, individuals, with political agency and a right to self-definition.

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