Proposition 63: The California English Language Amendment

CONNIE DYSTE

University of California, Los Angeles

This article discusses events leading up to and following the passage of Proposition 63, a state constitutional amendment which declared English the official language of California in the 1986 midterm election. Proposition 63 was extremely popular, passing by a margin of 73 per cent to 27 per cent. This article discusses the background, context, and support for Proposition 63 in an attempt to account for this popularity. The symbolic nature of Proposition 63 is explored, and the argument made that it is being used by the national organization of 'US English' as part of a political agenda to fight the use of languages other than English in the public sector.

A brief outline of legislation which preceded Proposition 63 is presented, and arguments of both proponents and opponents are examined. The results of a questionnaire on Proposition 63 are presented, as well as an analysis of voting behavior on the measure taken from two sources of data: the Southern California Social Survey conducted by UCLA, and the Field Poll of August 1986. Pre-election arguments, voting behavior on propositions, ideological predispositions, and the notion of 'symbolic racism' are dicussed as possible determinants of the vote.

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the history of the United States, language issues have at times assumed a prominent position in political debates concerning education and civil rights, especially during times of increased immigration. At present, most Americans, native-born or newly-arrived, recognize that the ability to speak English is essential to participation in American life. Not all Americans have that ability, and measures have been introduced to make available multilingual services and bilingual education in an attempt to provide equally for all citizens regardless of language background. Some people, however, see multilingual legislation as counter to the traditional ideal of the 'melting pot', where the goal is assimilation to the majority culture, and the movement to make English the official language of the United States is in full swing.

Despite the demographic diversity of its population, California is, paradoxically, in the forefront of this swing against multiculturalism, having made English the official language of the state by referendum in the 1986 midterm election. This decision may have a major impact on bilingual education and ESL programs in California, on language rights legislation in other states, and on the language policy of the nation as a whole.

Applied Linguistics, Vol. 10, No. 3 © Oxford University Press, 1989.

The purpose of this article is to examine the background, context, and support of Proposition 63, the California English Language Amendment. Language status decisions are always political acts, but Proposition 63 differs from most official language legislation in that it was initiated by members of the language majority on behalf of an already clearly dominant language with an established historical and literary tradition, contrary to the usual circumstances for determining language status in conjuction with establishing nationhood or as an action by an aggrieved linguistic minority. Proposition 63 was a rare case of members of the public taking responsibility for these decisions through the process of direct legislation. In order to understand why Proposition 63 had such great popular support, it is necessary to examine why it came into being, what people believed it represented, and what they felt it would accomplish.

Proposition 63 was not the first attempt in Californian legislative history to regulate the role of language. Language issues have been politically sensitive ever since California was ceded from Mexico to the US by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1849. This pact promised that English and Spanish would be given equal status in the operations of government and education in the Southwest. The State Constitution of California did have an English language provision dating from 1879, which was removed as surplusage in the constitutional revision of 1966. This provision was in Section 24 of Article IV, which concerns the legislative department of the state government.

Proposition 63 amends Article III, the State of California, which includes sections concerning the boundaries of the state, the separation of powers, administrative agencies, and suits against the state. If the only result of Proposition 63 was to declare English the official language of California, there would probably be little practical legal effect, as has been established in the case of the national English Language Amendment by Charles Dale, legislative attorney for the Congressional Research Service (Dale 1983). However, the wording of Proposition 63 provides for much more than that. It requires the Legislature to 'take all steps necessary to ensure that the role of English as the *common* language of the state of California is *preserved* and *enhanced*', and to 'make no law which *diminishes* or *ignores* the role of English as the *common* language of the state of California' (my italics). This differentiates it from the laws of the other states with official English legislation, where English is given largely symbolic recognition in the same manner as a state slogan, emblem, song, mineral, flower, or bird.

Before the passage of Proposition 63, six other states had passed official English legislation in this century: Nebraska in 1920; Illinois in 1923; Virginia in 1981; Indiana, Kentucky, and Tennessee in 1984. The California initiative, however, differs from previous legislation in a number of ways. First, it is a constitutional amendment, and can only be removed or altered by another constitutional amendment. Second, none of the other state laws has a provision resembling Section D, which allows any resident or person doing business in California to sue the State to enforce this action. Finally, Proposition 63 represents the first time that the issue of official English has been put to popular

vote. California has thus become a test case for future legislation of this type in other states.

The story of Proposition 63 began in 1981, when then Senator S. I. Hayakawa (Republican, California) first proposed an amendment to the US Constitution to make English the official language of the United States. The proposal was unsuccessful, but Hayakawa was approached by John Tanton and Gerda Bikales of the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR) who were interested in starting an organization to campaign for passage of Hayakawa's English Language Amendment (ELA). Hayakawa had been sent donations by people who supported the ELA, and these donations became the seed money for the organization 'US English' (Keyser 1986).

Most of 'US English's' founders and about half of its members are from California, where a series of campaigns was begun to pass official English legislation at the state level prior to further attempts to pass the ELA at the federal level. In 1983, the California Committee for Ballots in English sponsored Proposition O in San Francisco, which called for a return to English-only ballots, and passed by 63 per cent (California English Campaign 1986). In the 1983–4 Congressional session, State Senator Ollie Speraw (Republican, Los Angeles) introduced Senate Joint Resolution 7, which would have required the state to support the ELA. In the 1984 general election, California voters approved Proposition 38, a statewide measure similar to Proposition O. These measures did not result in the elimination of bilingual ballots (which are federally mandated), but placed California on record as opposing the federal law. In 1984–5, Assembly Member Frank Hill introduced two bills concerning official English: Assembly Bill (AB) 201 and Assembly Constitutional Amendment (ACA) 30. AB 201, which would have amended Government Code §276 to declare English the official language of the state, died in the Assembly. ACA 30, which proposed a constitutional amendment similar to Proposition 63, also failed. Spurred on by the popular success of Proposition O and 38, the state chapter of 'US English', the California English Campaign, decided to put the issue before the voters at the state level: by May 1986, 1,017,000 signatures (the third largest number in California's history) had been gathered to qualify the initiative for the 1986 ballot (US English, *Update* January–February 1985; Hill 1986). Proposition 63 was on its way.

The spiritual figurehead of the campaign on both the state and national level was ex-Senator S. I. Hayakawa, honorary chairman of the California English Campaign (CEC) and 'US English'. Although his role in the CEC and 'US English' was mainly advisory, he was so strongly connected with the official English issue that his stylized image (with trademark tam-o-shanter) replaced the 50 stars on the US flag-inspired cover of the CEC's 'English Unites US' campaign brochure.

According to Hayakawa, 'the basic reason for designating English as the official language of the State of California is to prevent the naming of a second official language for California or for any political subdivision thereof' (Hayakawa 1986b). Hayakawa, a Canadian immigrant of Japanese ancestry,

often cited the example of officially bilingual countries torn by language strife, such as Canada and Belgium, in his arguments. He claimed to have been motivated by 'the misguided idea to try to impose French in the non-French speaking provinces of Canada' (Trombley 1986a). He saw Proposition 63 as an 'insurance policy' for future generations, a legislative move to 'foresee and forestall' attempts by language minority groups who might wish to seek official status for languages other than English. At the Senate Committee on Elections Hearing in Los Angeles, he said, 'I'm not thinking of today, but of the 21st century'. In countering claims that Proposition 63 was racist, Hayakawa wrote 'Proposition 63 is a measure to strengthen the ties that bind together all of us, of whatever national origin or race, through the magical bond of a common language' (Hayakawa 1986a). Hayakawa's ideological concern was that, without an official language, California and the United States are in real danger of being divided along racial lines. His arguments resonated with patriotic sentiment, with quotes from President Roosevelt and Wilson, and the Pledge of Allegiance—'Are we, or are we not, going to remain "One nation, indivisible"?' (Hayakawa 1986a). Hayakawa's appeal was to an idealized American vision, with minimal reference to the practical or legal implications of instigating major changes in language policy.

Another of the main proponents of Proposition 63 was Assembly Member Frank Hill (Republican, Whittier), Honorary Vice-chairman of the CEC. Hill began his political career as manager of Hayakawa's Washington office. He has led the fight in the California legislature for official English and against bilingual education; he introduced two official English bills in 1984–5, and plans to put forward more bills as necessary as the legal battles over Proposition 63 proceed.

Hill's arguments in favour of Proposition 63 centred around the notions of assimilation and biculturalism. He saw programs such as bilingual education and bilingual public services as detrimental to ideals of national unity. He is opposed to measures which allow non-English speaking residents access to government services in their first language. According to Hill, these measures only discourage the learning of English by immigrants, and promote language separatism. He did not believe Proposition 63 was racist—'the racists are those who want bilingual ballots, and those who want to isolate others into language barrios' (Morris 1986). Hill has opposed bilingual education on the grounds that it takes too long for children to make the transition into English. He sees bilingual education as a self-serving bureaucracy, maintaining jobs for educators and promoting biculturalism. 'If we don't transition children as quickly as possible into English speaking classrooms, bilingual education will become a guilty party in the growing trend to isolate immigrants into language barrios' (Morris 1986).

Assembly Member Hill saw Proposition 63 as a statement to the legislature, a starting point for challenging the foundations of bilingual education, because it could provide the constitutional basis for future legislation aimed at targets such as bilingual education and bilingual ballots. Hill believed public support for the measure was indicative of fears that the ideal of assimilation was being

challenged by recent language rights legislation. His catch-phrase, which appeared at the end of most of his statements, summarized this concern: 'The melting pot has served this nation for two hundred years. The ingredients may have varied, but this is no time to change the recipe' (Hill 1986).

Fears of the erosion of English as the common language of the United States were also central to the arguments of businessman Stanley Diamond, founding director of 'US English' and chairman of the CEC. According to Diamond, the English language 'is being eroded by bilingual ballots, by bilingual education, and by some Hispanic political leaders who have as a goal a bilingual culture for California' ('Initiative doesn't speak L.A. council's language', 1986). Diamond saw bilingual education as promoting separatism, and believed it was a disservice to ethnic communities because it slows or stops the assimilation of children into the mainstream culture. Although claiming that the members of the CEC were the strongest supporters of bilingual education, Diamond said they only supported bilingual programs with a large ESL component that transition children into English as quickly as possible. He was well aware of the importance of Proposition 63 to future campaigns in other states to declare English the official language. 'We want California to lead the nation in this—we hope this will have an impact on Congress. We want very much to get rid of bilingual and multilingual ballots and change the focus of bilingual education so there is much greater emphasis on learning English' (Lopez 1986).

Arguments against: Californians United Against Proposition 63

Although Proposition 63 did not have the high media saturation or movie-star appeal of some of the other controversial propositions in the November 1986 election, there was widespread opposition to the initiative from a broad spectrum of the community. Many of those who opposed the measure came together in a statewide coalition called Californians United Against Proposition 63. The list of opponents was long, with some very prominent names, including Governor George Deukmejian, Los Angeles Mayor Tom Bradley, California Attorney General John Van De Kamp, California Assembly Speaker Willie Brown, and many Hispanic, Asian, Black and civil and political rights organizations such as LULAC (League of United Latin American Citizens), MALDEF (Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund), ACLU (American Civil Liberties Union), and the League of Women Voters. However, they did not have the advance strategy, central support network, or financial resources of the proponents, and consequently their public exposure was limited to legislative hearings, newspaper articles, and press statements. The arguments of the opponents reflected deep concern over what they saw as the potentially damaging effects of the initiative because of the vague wording and open-ended provisions which could lead to harmful or needless lawsuits. They felt it limited rather than expanded rights, did nothing concrete to encourage the learning of English, and punished Californians who do not speak English. The opponents also feared a 'hidden agenda' for which official English was only a smoke-screen to eliminate multilingual services and clamp down on immigration.

The most politically prominent opponent to Proposition 63 was the Governor of California, George Deukmejian. Deukmejian, the son of Armenian immigrants, was particularly sensitive to how the measure would affect California's sizeable ethnic population. In a press release dated September 2, 1986, the Governor called the measure 'an unnecessary, confusing, and counterproductive way to emphasize the importance of a common language'. His statement reflected the concerns of many of his opponents, who recognized the value of English in American society but opposed the attempt to legislate on English through Proposition 63. An attorney, Deukmejian was worried that 'the ambiguous wording of the proposition could lead to a voluminous round of litigation', and 'would also cause fear, confusion, and resentment among minority Californians'.

Another vocal opponent of Proposition 63 was the state Attorney General, John Van De Kamp, who saw the measure as 'an open invitation to harmful legislation' (Testimony at the Senate Committee on Elections Hearing, Los Angeles, October 1, 1986). As California's highest legal official, he was particularly concerned about the 'potential mischief' which could result from Section D of the measure. He was a co-author of the ballot argument against Proposition 63 along with Assembly Speaker Willie Brown and Los Angeles Police Department Chief Daryl Gates. They argued that Proposition 63 was unnecessary, negative, and counter-productive: 'English is and will remain the language of California. Proposition 63 won't change that. What it will do is produce a nightmare of expensive litigation and needless resentment' (California Ballot Pamphlet 1986). Gates was also fearful that Proposition 63 could adversely affect Los Angeles Police Department community programs such as bilingual 911 emergency operators and 'storefront' police stations manned by bilingual employees.

Vigorous opposition to Proposition 63 was also voiced by organizations such as the ACLU (American Civil Liberties Union), MALDEF (Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, LULAC (League of United Latin American Citizens), CATESOL (California Association of Teachers of English as a Second Language), and many other legal and educational organizations. Their arguments against the measure were basically the same as those of the statewide coalition, although each had concerns specific to the interest group represented. For example, the California Catholic Conference of Bishops issued a statement which argued that 'It would open the way for endless and costly lawsuits against bilingual programs and services, including those offered by our network of Catholic charities' (California Bishops . . .' 1986). The ACLU was opposed because 'it could be used to cut off such publicly funded programs as multilingual 911 emergency operators, health information pamphlets printed in other languages, and dozens of programs that are important to California because they deal with issues of health and safety affecting us all' (American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California, 1986). All groups expressed fears of divisiveness, resentment, the potential legal ramifications, and possible curtailment of bilingual services and bilingual education.

Fears that Proposition 63 could result in discrimination against non-English speaking citizens were central to the arguments of MALDEF, a national Latino civil rights organization which was strongly involved in the campaign against the measure. John Trasvina, legislative attorney for MALDEF and spokesman on this issue, argued that Latinos and Asian Americans were very aware of the need to learn English, but were hampered by inadequate educational opportunities which Proposition 63 did nothing to alleviate. Trasvina was worried that Proposition 63 would lead to unnecessary and possibly harmful legal questions, as happened in Dade County, Florida, after an official English ordinance was passed there in 1980. He was concerned that 'if Proposition 63 passes, English will not be the official language of California, discrimination will be' (Trasvina 1986).

Many educationalists felt that Proposition 63 did nothing to promote the learning of English and threatened to severely alter bilingual education programs. The CATESOL (California Association of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages) Board of Directors, urging a no-vote, issued a statement which said 'On the surface, this seems to be a proposition our organization should support. But in fact, it is a threat to our students and their families, and it may open the door for costly litigation which could affect us all' (memo, CATESOL Board of Directors, 1986). Most professionals in the field of ESL agreed that the major problem was not a lack of interest in learning English, but an inability to service the vast numbers of students who want to learn English within current state-imposed financial limitations. Although the proponents of Proposition 63 made campaign promises to increase funding for ESL, nothing in the wording of the measure provided for any such appropriation. This lack of specificity added further fuel to speculation about the true intentions of the proponents.

In examining the arguments for and against the measure, it becomes apparent that both sides saw it as representing far more than just the simple act of declaring English to be the official state language. But official designation of a language is never a straightforward act; it is always a politically and ideologically motivated process, involving the establishment and maintenance of power relations on a very basic human level (O'Barr and O'Barr 1976; Leibowitz 1984). Although Proposition 63 sent a simple message to the majority of the voters of California, the implications of that message are more complex and far-reaching than perhaps even its authors intended or foresaw.

AN ANALYSIS OF THE VOTE ON PROPOSITION 63

Proposition 63 passed by a margin of 73 per cent to 27 per cent, a figure which indicates very strong voter preference. But why did Proposition 63 receive such a high approval rate? Were these votes specifically for Proposition 63, or were voters responding to issues which to them were more symbolic than specific? This section will examine survey and election data in an attempt to determine who voted for Proposition 63, and why.

Three sources of data will be used in the following discussion of the passage of

Proposition 63: a questionnaire on Proposition 63 which was distributed to five groups—proponents, opponents, ESL professionals, and Anglo and minority residents—which examined attitudes towards issues related to Proposition 63 among those groups; the Southern California Social Survey (SCSS), a telephone survey of 1038 Southern California residents over 18 conducted in February of 1986 by the Institute of Social Science Research (ISSR) at UCLA, which provided background opinions on a number of race-related topics before Proposition 63 had even qualified for the ballot; and the Field Institute Public Opinion Poll of August 1986, archived at UCLA through the State Data Program, which gave survey data of statewide opinions of the 1986 election.

QUESTIONNAIRE ON PROPOSITION 63

In order to gain an understanding of what Proposition 63 meant to the people most involved with the issue, I distributed a questionnaire in October 1986 to five groups: proponents, opponents, ESL professionals, and members of the public of both Anglo and minority backgrounds. The questionnaire was mailed or given out in person to legislators, politicians, community spokesmen, and leaders of organizations connected with the issue. I received 12 replies from proponents of Proposition 63, and 9 replies from opponents. Questionnaires were also distributed to professionals in the TESL field in Southern California, and 25 were returned from this group. To provide a comparison with the public at large, I also gave the questionnaire at random to people in the community of both Anglo and minority ethnic heritage, receiving 32 responses from Anglos and 16 from people of minority backgrounds. In total, 95 responses were received out of 150. The questionnaire consisted of 15 questions on issues related to Proposition 63 drawn from public debate on the measure, preceded by a short definition of the proposition.

The questionnaire was designed using a Likert-type attitude scale in which opinions on given statements or questions are answered on a 5-point rating scale. Questions were worded so that a low score indicated agreements with issues addressed by Proposition 63, and a high score indicated disagreement. Neutral responses fell into the middle range of the scale. The 15 questions in the questionnaire fall into three basic categories: attitudes towards the official language issue, attitudes towards other language-related issues (bilingual ballots, bilingual education), and beliefs about the possible effects of Proposition 63.

As expected, great differences in attitudes are seen in the scores of the proponents and opponents of Proposition 63. The proponents and the opponents were the furthest apart on almost all questions, while the uninvolved groups (ESL professionals, Anglos, and minorities) were somewhere in between on most questions.

On the first question, concerning the necessity of making English the official language of California, the scores of both the proponents (mean = 1.25, sd = .45) and the opponents (mean = 4.78, sd = .44) showed very little deviation. The proponents felt it was very necessary, while the opponents felt it

was completely unnecessary. As for the second question, which concerned the possibility of English losing its role as the common language of California, the opponents felt this was impossible (mean = 4.67, sd = .50), while the proponents were spread out on this question (mean = 2.00, sd = 1.28), responding on average that it was possible. On the third question, which concerned the possibility of a language other than English gaining official status, the standard deviations for all groups were similarly high, and responses tended to be somewhat neutral. Question 4, which concerned the possibility of California becoming officially bilingual in the future, elicited responses similar to question 3—no strong opinions from any group, and a similar pattern of means and variance.

The opponents to Proposition 63 almost all strongly disagreed with question 5, which asked whether immigrants should be required to speak English before immigrating to the US. The proponents and the members of the public were fairly neutral on this question. But the proponents were unanimously against question 6, which concerned bilingual ballots, strongly disagreeing with this issue. This brings to mind the popularity of Proposition 38 in the 1984 election (also sponsored by 'US English'), which called for the elimination of bilingual ballots and passed by 71 per cent.

Question 7, which asked whether the respondents agreed with the statement that social services should be available in languages other than English, elicited very strong opposing responses from both the opponents of Proposition 63 (mean = 2.50, sd = 1.27) and the ESL professionals (mean = 4.67, sd = .50). Proponents of the measure were somewhat divided on this issue. The proponents and the members of the public tended to agree with question 8, which concerned whether foreign language business signs should be required to have English translations, but responses within those groups varied considerably. On the issue of whether bilingual education helps or hinders English language acquisition (question 9), the proponents and opponents showed great differences in opinion and strong unanimity within their groups, whereas the other groups were fairly neutral and divergent in their responses. Question 10, which concerned whether multilingual services encouraged or discouraged English language acquisition, showed a similar pattern—great unanimity and polarization in the opinions of the proponents and the opponents, and neutrality among those involved in the campaign.

The proponents of the campaign were very unified in their feeling that Proposition 63 would strongly encourage immigrants to learn English (question 11), whereas the other groups were again fairly neutral. All groups were neutral on question 12, which concerned the effects of Proposition 63 illegal immigration, and this indicates that for these respondents the issue was not strongly connected with the official English measure. Opponents of the measure (mean = 4.78, sd. = .44) and the ESL professionals (mean = 4.32, sd = .75) were of the opinion that Proposition 63 was highly likely to result in unnecessary lawsuits. The proponents were somewhat neutral and spread out on this issue. They did believe it would place restrictions on foreign language business

signs (question 14), whereas the other groups envisaged no such effect. And on the final question (15), which concerned whether Proposition 63 would unite or divide the community, the proponents (mean = 1.50, sd = .67) and the opponents (mean = 4.55, sd = .73) clearly and unanimously held opposing beliefs, while the other groups were less unified in their opinion but tended to believe it would be divisive.

A reliability analysis was run on the questionnaire, and found a very high degree of reliability (Cronbach's alpha = .9113) after deletion of questions 8 and 12. This indicates that question 8, which asked whether foreign language business signs should be required to have English translations, and question 12, which asked about the possible effect of Proposition 63 on illegal immigration, did not reflect attitudes towards issues connected with the measure as reliably as the others; attitudes of respondents on these questions were not strongly connected with attitudes towards Proposition 63.

Table 1 shows the results of a one-way analysis of variance run on the questionnaire with questions 8 and 12 deleted. Highly significant differences were found between most groups. Duncan's multiple range test (Table 2) shows where these significant differences were located.

Table 1: One-way ANOVA for attitudes towards Proposition 63 by groups

Source of variance	SS	d.f.	MS	F
Between groups	39.98	4	9.99	25.06*
Within groups	35.49	89	.39	

*$P < .001$.

As Table 2 shows, the proponents (Group 1) were significantly different ($p < .05$) from everybody; the ESL professionals (Group 3) and the opponents (Group 2) were significantly different from all groups except each other; and the Anglos (Group 4) and the minorities (Group 5) were also significantly different

Table 2: Duncan's multiple range test: Groups significantly different at the 0.05 level

*Mean**	*Group*	*1* Pro.	*5* Min.	*4* Anglo	*3* ESL	*2* Opp.
1.85	1 Pro.					
3.14	5 Min.	*				
3.25	4 Anglo	*				
3.81	3 ESL	*	*	*		
4.24	2 Opp.	*	*	*		

* Mean for the entire questionnaire.

from all groups except each other. The results of these analyses indicate that the proponents of Proposition 63, who were its authors and sponsors, had the clearest attitudes about what it represented.

The purpose of the questionnaire was to explore the connection of attitudes on Proposition 63 with related issues such as bilingual education and the provision of multilingual services among different groups in the community, and the degree to which Proposition 63 was felt to be a necessary reaction to a perceived threat. Responses to the questions indicate that the ideologues held much stronger beliefs about these issues than the ESL professionals and the public, who were fairly neutral on almost all questions. The results of the questionnaire suggest that the official English issue was of greatest concern to those who are personally strongly involved in opposing or supporting the issue, and of lesser concern to the public, who didn't exhibit a clear understanding of its purposes and intentions.

THE SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA SOCIAL SURVEY

Data from the Southern California Social Survey (SCSS) will be used to illustrate public opinion on the issue of mother tongue maintenance in February 1986, nine months before the election and three months before Proposition 63 had even qualified for the ballot. The SCSS is an annual computer-assisted telephone survey of the population of metropolitan Southern California conducted by the Institute of Social Science Research (ISSR) at UCLA. A total of 1,038 people were interviewed on a variety of topics of concern to Southern Californians. The sample has been weighted to correspond to the actual demographic composition of Southern California, thus n = 2,090 in Table 3.

For this study, responses to the language question were cross-tabulated with demographic variables of race, place of birth, education, and political ideology, to create a picture of attitudes towards this issue within groups. These data are useful in examining the hypothesis that some of the support for Proposition 63 stemmed from symbolic rather than issue-specific sources.

Among other questions, respondents were asked whether it was more important for immigrants to learn English and the traditions of the United States, or to hold on to the language and culture of the country they come from (the options to reply 'both' or 'don't know' were also available).

As Table 3 shows, the majority of almost all groups favored response 1, that immigrants should learn English. The only exceptions were respondents whose race was 'other' than those listed and those with a graduate level education. A slight majority of Hispanics (52 per cent), agreed with response 1. Response 2, that immigrants should hold on to their own language and culture, had very little support, from a low of 5 per cent of whites, 'others', and conservatives, to a high of 15 per cent of Hispanics and 14 per cent of those who describe themselves as 'very liberal'. A major difference between this question and Proposition 63 is the option to respond that both learning English and maintaining one's native language and culture are important, a response that indicates an acceptance of bilingualism and cultural pluralism. Half of those whose race was 'other' gave

Table 3: Southern California Social Survey, February 1986: What should be more important to immigrants?

	n =	Learn English	Own language	Both	Don't know
Race					
White	(1,347)	63%	5%	30%	2%
Black	(267)	53	13	21	3
Hispanic	(326)	52	15	32	1
Asian	(91)	60	11	25	3
Other	(42)	45	5	50	
US Born					
Yes	(1,662)	62	7	28	2
No	(428)	53	11	34	2
Education					
HS<	(323)	53	12	31	3
HS, no coll.	(1,041)	66	7	26	1
AA/BA	(544)	57	8	33	1
Grad.	(179)	49	7	39	5
Lib./Con.					
Very liberal	(209)	52	14	33	1
Liberal	(263)	60	11	28	2
Moderate	(748)	64	8	26	1
Conservative	(382)	62	5	33	
No Choice	(440)	57	8	32	4
Average	(2,090)	60	8	30	2

Source: Institute for Social Science Research, UCLA.

the response 'both', as well as a substantial minority of almost all groups, ranging from a low of 21 per cent of blacks to highs of 39 per cent of graduates and professionals, and 33 per cent of those with AA or BA degrees, very liberals, and conservatives.

The average for all respondents was 60 per cent for response 1 (immigrants should learn English), 8 per cent for response 2 (immigrants should hold on to their own language), and 30 per cent for 'both'. This indicates that the majority of those surveyed, including those of Hispanic and Asian descent and those born outside the US, are in agreement with the importance of learning English. This corroborates data from a 1985 survey by the Rand corporation, which found that more than 90 per cent of first-generation Mexican-Americans born in the US speak English only (Trombley 1986b). As any ESL teacher working in adult education can attest, the demand by immigrants for English classes far exceeds the supply; most immigrants are well aware that English is essential to succeed in mainstream America. This runs counter to the belief of some supporters of Proposition 63 that immigrants aren't motivated to learn English.

The SCSS was not an election survey and did not ask any specific questions about Proposition 63. However, data from the survey does give us an indication of general attitudes towards related issues which the public bring with them to the polls.

THE CALIFORNIA POLL

Proposition 63 was one of the three controversial propositions on the November 1986 ballot, and data from the California Poll conducted in August and September showed a high degree of awareness of Proposition 63 early in the campaign (Field 1986). The California Poll is a random sampling of age-eligible Californians which employs the Random Digit Dialing method of telephone selection. The sample ($n = 1028$) was weighted to bring it into conformity with census-established population parameters for California. In August 1986, 65.5 per cent of those polled had seen or heard of Proposition 63, a figure which increased to 77 per cent by October. The California Poll also showed a steady increase in the percentage of respondents in favor of the measure, from 47 per cent in August to 57 per cent in October. As voter awareness increased, those in favor increased by 10 per cent and those undecided increased by 3 per cent, while those opposed dropped by 1 per cent. This indicates that as the election drew nearer and voter awareness increased, attitudes towards the proposition became increasingly favorable despite a predominantly negative press and virtually no television or radio advertising. The October California Poll asked respondents to give their reasons for supporting or opposing the measure: 59 per cent of those in favour mentioned 'if you live in the US you should be able to speak English'; 29 per cent felt it was important for society to have a common language; 6 per cent mentioned it was easier to communicate if everyone had one language. Only 7 per cent mentioned a specific instrumental concern—the expense of printing everything in other languages. These data, combined with the steady increase in support over time, back up the hypothesis that Proposition 63 stimulated standing opinions of the electorate rather than issue-specific concerns.

Raw data from the August California Poll survey was used to examine responses to questions on Proposition 63 across groups. Respondents were asked if they had seen or heard of Proposition 63, and were then read the following definition:

> Well (as you know) Proposition 63 would require the state legislature to ensure that the role of English as the common language of the state of California is preserved and enhanced. If you were voting today on Proposition 63, would you vote yes or no?

One problem with this definition is that it does not mention the provision for standing to sue the state, which was one of the principal concerns of opponents to the measure.

The variables of race, education, and political ideology were used to determine who were the strongest supporters and opponents of the measure. Table 4 shows the percentages of responses of these groups to the three questions concerning Proposition 63.

Table 4: The California Poll: Voter awareness and disposition toward Proposition 63 (August 1986)

		Have seen or heard of Prop. 63			*From what heard, how vote*				*Prop. 63 defined, how vote*		
	n =	Yes	No	Don't know	Yes	No	Don't know	n = *	Yes	No	Don't know
Race											
White	(609)	67%	30%	3%	75%	19%	6%	(410)	79%	17%	4%
Black	(40)	65	28	7	69	23	8	(26)	75	20	5
Hispanic	(70)	57	43	—	48	45	7	(40)	53	37	10
Asian	(13)	54	46	—	43	57	—	(7)	46	39	15
Education											
HS<	(50)	58	38	4	83	3	14	(29)	82	4	14
HS, trade sch.	(160)	58	39	3	84	11	5	(93)	84	11	5
Some college	(257)	66	32	2	73	21	6	(169)	78	18	4
BA/MA	(156)	72	24	3	74	19	7	(113)	77	21	2
Post-MA	(52)	65	29	6	44	47	9	(34)	46	44	10
Lib./Con.											
Liberal	(125)	59	37	4	50	41	9	(74)	54	39	6
Moderate	(228)	68	31	1	68	24	8	(154)	75	20	5
Conservative	(250)	67	28	5	85	11	4	(167)	89	9	2
Don't know	(137)	66	33	1	71	22	7	(90)	72	20	8
Average	(747)	66	31	3	72	22	6	(489)	76	19	5

* Number of respondents who had heard of Proposition 63.

Source: The Field Institute, San Francisco.

Table 4 reveals that the strongest supporters of Proposition 63 were whites, the less educated, and conservatives; the strongest opponents were Hispanics and Asians, the highly educated, and liberals. Interestingly, the use of a 'filter' (defining the proposition for the respondent) in the interview resulted in increased support and decreased opposition, indicating that for most people who were not aware of the proposition there was very little in it that was objectionable.

The only group who did not give majority support to Proposition 63 was the most highly educated group ('work past the master's degree'). Members of this group who had heard of the measure were 44 per cent in favour and 47 per cent opposed. This finding is comparable to that of the similar group in the Southern California Social Survey (Table 3), who were the weakest supporters of that survey's language question. Those with less than a high school education were 83 per cent in favour and only 3 per cent opposed. This group also registered the highest percentage of 'don't know' responses (14 per cent). Education seemed to be the strongest determinant of voter disposition towards Proposition 63, according to these data. Better educated voters had a more balanced distribution of preferences than the less educated, possibly because they were better informed on the issue and more able to form a considered opinion. The least educated, on the other hand, had the lowest percentage of voter awareness (58 per cent), the highest concentration of opinion, and the highest degree of non-attitude.

Distinct differences were also found according to political ideology. Conservatives were the strongest supporters—85 per cent of those who had seen or heard of the measure and 89 per cent of those who had it defined for them would have voted 'yes'. Liberals were the weakest supporters—only 50 per cent of those who had seen or heard of the measure and 59 per cent (still a majority) after it had been defined would have voted 'yes'. On the other hand, 41 per cent of liberals who had seen or heard of the measure were opposed to it, compared to only 11 per cent of conservatives.

The data for Hispanic respondents rate a closer look, because Proposition 63 was strongly opposed by Hispanic community leaders and organizations and the Hispanic press. Although the measure received majority support from Hispanics in the survey, the percentages were much smaller than for other racial groups—48 per cent support from those who had seen or heard of the measure, and 53 per cent after it was defined. The Asian group was even more strongly opposed; however, as the number of Asian respondents was very small ($n = 13$), those figures are less reliable. We can compare the Hispanic response to these survey questions to the actual Hispanic vote in the 1986 election, which was 41 per cent in favor and 59 per cent opposed (Freedberg 1987). The Hispanic vote on Proposition 63 indicates that the measure was perceived by some of this group as anti-Hispanic.

The popularity of Proposition 63 can be attributed to several sources. On the negative side, voter ignorance and overt and symbolic racism can all be said to have played a part in the measure's success. The notion of 'symbolic racism'

provides an important perspective for understanding how symbolic aspects of Proposition 63 transferred to voting behavior. The concept of symbolic racism (Cardoza, Huddy, and Sears 1984) was first introduced to explain the political role of white racial attitudes in post-war America. It is concerned with explaining the kind of racism involved in the mass white public's political responses, and is primarily oriented toward anti-black attitudes, although certainly the notion extends to anti-'other' discriminatory attitudes. Symbolic racism is conceptualized as a joint function of anti-black affect and traditional American moral values operating within the broader theory of symbolic politics, which holds that much adult political behavior results from symbolic predispositions acquired in childhood. The symbolic racism approach suggests that old-fashioned racism no longer has political force, whereas symbolic racism does. Overtly racist reactions were a small but significant impetus; symbolic racist attitudes in the form of a backlash against affirmative action or compensatory programs such as bilingual education and bilingual ballots also had a strong influence not only on the vote, but on the inception and proliferation of official English legislation on both the state and federal levels.

On a less pejorative note, many voters may have been responding to an American ideological symbol, or felt the measure would in some way strengthen the position of English in California. The interviews, newspaper articles, and data quoted in this article show that although many people were aware of the measure, few understood its context or purpose. Proposition 63 was also symbolic on a more ideological plane. To many people it represented a basic social norm of American society—Americans speak English—and in that sense it was very hard to be against it. And for some it was an idea which was already felt to be true anyway. The evidence leads to the conclusion that the official English issue was highly symbolic, and the mood of California and the United States at the time of the election was very receptive to the various symbols it represents.

At the time of writing (March 1988), 13 bills have been introduced in the California legislature which concern Proposition 63 and ESL and bilingual education. A closer look at the sponsorship of these bills shows that the debate over Proposition 63 is developing along party lines. The bills sponsored by the Democrats are concerned with specifying the legal procedures involved in the implementation of the measure, perhaps with the added intent of complicating the bureaucratic process in order to dampen its effects. The Republican bills, on the other hand, are concerned with changing the emphasis of bilingual education to promote the use of more English in the classroom. This was one of the strategic goals of 'US English'. According to Assembly Member Hill (personal communication, October 10 1986), Section D of Proposition 63 (the provision to sue) was included to provide a constitutional basis for challenging the legality of bilingual education programs in case his bilingual education bill failed. Although federal law requires school systems to provide special programs for children with limited English proficiency, it does not mandate how these programs are to be carried out, whereas the state legislative guidelines in

California were more stringent prior to their expiration in July 1987. Proposition 63 allows opponents of bilingual education programs to challenge them on the basis that these programs diminish or ignore English. The bilingual education issue is certain to be the first legislative skirmish of the California ELA battle.

Since the passage of Proposition 63 two more states, Georgia and Arkansas, have passed bills declaring English their official language. Similar legislation is now pending in at least thirty other states. On the federal level, there are five ELAs in Congress in 1987—four in the House and one in the Senate—to make English the official language of the United States. According to Assembly Member Hill, Proposition 63 started a 'grassfire' which is quickly becoming a 'brushfire' (personal communication, April 16 1987).

Although Proposition 63 evoked a symbolic response in California, it was not merely a symbolic gesture. It was a symbol used deliberately by the organization 'US English' to enact a political agenda to fight the use of languages other than English in the public sector. The members of 'US English' have definite strategies at both the state and federal levels for implementing the provisions of the English Language Amendment, but any resident or person doing business in California may also initiate suits against any grievance perceived as falling under the jurisdiction of this amendment. Declaring English as the official language of California may well have a major negative impact on the status of multilingual rights legislation in this state, and on similar legislation in other states. However, by focusing attention on English, it may also have the positive effect of making available more money for different types of programs for ESL instruction.

(Revised version received March 1988)

REFERENCES

American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California. 1986. *ACLU Newsletter*, October.

California Ballot Pamphlet. 1986.

'California bishops oppose Prop. 63 as prejudicial.' 1986. *The Tidings*, October 3.

California English Campaign. 1986. 'English Unites US.' (brochure).

'California vote gives boost to "English only" movement.' Special report, bilingual education: language, learning, and politics. *Education Week*, April 1.

Cardoza, D., L. Huddy, and **D. Sears.** 1984. 'The symbolic attitudes study: public attitudes toward bilingual education.' National Center for Bilingual Research, National Institute of Education.

Chandler, J. 1986. 'Vast majority polled back "English-only" initiative.' *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*, October 21.

Constitution of the State of California Annotated. 1946. Sacramento: California State Printing Office.

Dale, C. 1983. 'Legal Analysis of H.J.R. 169 proposing to amend the U.S. Constitution to make English the official language of the U.S.' Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress.

Donahue, T. 1985. 'US English: Its life and works.' *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 56: 99–112.

Ferguson, C. and **S. B. Heath** (eds.). 1981. *Language in the USA*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Field, M. 1986. October 7. 'Prop. 63, The initiative which would declare English as the state's official language has very large majority support.' The California Poll: The Field Institute.

Fishman, J. 1981. 'Language policy: past, present, and future' in C. Ferguson and S. B. Heath (eds.). 1981.

Fishman, J. (ed.) 1986. 'Language rights and the English Language Amendment.' *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 60.

Freedberg, L. 1987. 'Latinos: Building power from the ground up.' *California Journal* pp. 12–17.

Hayakawa, S. I. 1986a. 'Why the English Language Amendment? An autobiographical statement.' Press statement.

Hayakawa, S. I. 1986b. 'Questions often asked about Proposition 63.' Press statement.

Hayakawa, S. I. 1986c. 'A common language, so all can pursue common goals.' *Los Angeles Times*, October 29.

Heath, S. B. and **F. Mandabach**. 1983. 'Language status decisions and the law in the United States' in J. Cobarrubias and J. Fishman (eds.): *Progress in Language Planning*. Berlin: Mouton.

Hill, F. 1986. 'English solidifies the melting pot.' Press release, October 13.

Hill, F. 1987. 'Hill unveils major bilingual education reform legislation.' Press release, January 22.

'Initiative doesn't speak L.A. council's language.' 1986. *Daily Breeze*, August 3.

Keyser, L. 1986. 'English—from sea to shining sea.' *Washington Times*, October 20.

Leibowicz, J. 1985. 'The proposed English Language Amendment: shield or sword?' *Yale Law and Policy Review* 3: 519–50.

Leibowitz, A. H. 1984. 'The official character of language in the United States: literacy requirements for immigration, citizenship, and entrance into American life.' *Aztlanis* 1: 25–70.

Lopez, P. 1986. 'English-only initiative: writing a final chapter on bilingualism?' *Orange County Register*, June 6.

Magelby, D. 1984. *Direct Legislation: Voting on Ballot Prepositions in the United States*. Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Morris, J. 1986. 'Controversy continues over Prop. 63 measure.' *San Gabriel Valley News Digest*, October 23–29.

O'Barr, W. M. and **J. F. O'Barr** (eds.) 1976. *Language and Politics*. The Hague: Mouton.

Trasvina, J. 1986. Testimony to the California Legislature, Senate Committee on Elections: Hearing on Proposition 63. San Francisco, September 29.

Trombley, W. 1986a. 'Prop. 63 backer will try to defeat opposing candidates.' *Los Angeles Times*, October 1.

Trombley, W. 1986b. 'English-only proposition kindles minorities' fears.' *Los Angeles Times*, October 12.

US English. *Update* (newsletter). Washington, DC.

Van De Kamp, J. 1986. Testimony at the Senate Committee on Election Hearing. Los Angeles, October 1.