

Arnold's Advantages: How Governor Schwarzenegger Acquired English Through De Facto Bilingual Education

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Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger has repeatedly mentioned that immigrants to the United States should do what he did to acquire English: Avoid using their first languages and speak, listen to, and read a vast amount of materials in English—a combination he referred to as “immersion.” Yet, Schwarzenegger’s real path to successful English acquisition was much closer to “de facto” bilingual education: He had the advantage of several years of education in his first language, which provided him with literacy and background knowledge. He also had several sources of comprehensible input in English, including English as a foreign language instruction in his native Austria, English as a second language and content courses in the United States, and a helpful circle of friends. His case is, unfortunately, not very similar to that of a large majority of those adult immigrants to the United States he intends to advise.

Keywords: bilingual education, de facto bilingual education, immersion, Schwarzenegger

GOVERNOR SCHWARZENEGGER'S ADVICE ON ENGLISH DEVELOPMENT

Arnold Schwarzenegger is a very successful acquirer of English as a second language (ESL), with only a slight accent and with a full command of sophisticated vocabulary and syntax, both productively and receptively. Observing his English language use in his capacity as Governor of California, it is, in fact, safe to say that many aspects of his English competence exceed that of some native speakers. How did he do it? His advice on language acquisition boils down to two principles, which he claimed he followed:

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1. Avoid the use of the first language.
2. Speak, listen to, and read lots of English.

SCHWARZENEGGER AND THE FIRST LANGUAGE

Noting that some groups appear to acquire English quickly and have little chance to use their own language, whereas others appear to not acquire English as fast, because they can easily use their first language, Schwarzenegger concluded that immigrants should avoid the use of their first language:

[A] lot of people that come from Europe are much quicker, and it's because they don't speak French, or they don't speak German, because they don't have that many people around to speak German to. So you're just forced to speak English, and that makes you be able to learn the language faster. It makes it much more difficult and much more challenging when you are, let's say, Latino, because you have so many Latinos. . . . There are just so many Latinos that speak Spanish all the time, they speak to each other in Spanish. So it makes it difficult to then perfect your English skills as quickly as possible. (Office of the Governor, 2007)

Schwarzenegger claimed that he followed this principle himself: “. . . [W]hen I came to this country, I did not, or very rarely, spoke German to anyone” (Office of the Governor, 2007). Schwarzenegger not only discourages speaking the first language, he also discourages listening to it, advising immigrants “to turn off the Spanish television set” (Office of the Governor, 2007)—a view enthusiastically endorsed by columnist Ruben Navarrette (2007).

SPEAK, LISTEN TO, AND READ ENGLISH

Schwarzenegger not only holds the view that immigrants should voluntarily engage in conversation as much as possible, he feels that they should be forced to use English. He announced that “I took every opportunity to spend time with friends who spoke English and practice English all the time. There was no other way” (Glaister, 2006); and, as noted earlier, he claimed that if “you're just forced to speak English . . . that makes you be able to learn the language faster” (Glaister, 2006).

In order to expedite this process, Schwarzenegger recommends watching English-language television: “. . . I remember I watched all the comedies and the news programs. I couldn't understand a word they were saying, but nevertheless I watched it, and eventually I got with it, and I learned” (Office of the Governor, 2007).

He also said that he followed the advice of his teachers at Santa Monica college (more on this later), who told him, “Read the LA Times, even though you don't understand it. Look at your dictionary and learn, and look at books that are English, look at comic books that are English, watch television, listen to radio that is English” (Office of the Governor, 2007).

Schwarzenegger refers to this combination of first-language avoidance and second-language use as “immersion”: “I learned English by immersion” (Glaister, 2006).

IMMERSION OR BILINGUAL EDUCATION?

We argue here that Gov. Schwarzenegger's actual path to English was much closer to bilingual education than it was to immersion. It was, in fact, identical to what has been termed "de facto" bilingual education. To see why this is so, we first need to discuss how languages, first and second, are acquired and then briefly explain the principles and components of bilingual education, a very successful way of helping learners acquire English (Crawford & Krashen, 2007). We argue that, while these components were present in Gov. Schwarzenegger's path to English, they are mostly absent in the path many immigrants are forced to take; especially those who arrive with little education in their first language.

How Language is Acquired: Comprehensible Input

Current language acquisition research strongly indicates that we acquire language in one way: when we understand it (Krashen, 2003). When we understand what we hear or read, we gradually acquire, or absorb, grammar, vocabulary, and, in the case of writing, spelling. This hypothesis has been confirmed in many different kinds of studies:

- Second-language students in classes that contain more "comprehensible input" consistently outperform those in traditional classes.
- Those who do more self-selected reading in class do better than those in classes without reading time.
- Clear correlations exist between the amount of comprehensible oral and written input second-language acquirers get and their progress in English.

The "comprehension hypothesis" asserts that we do not acquire language when we produce it—that is, when we speak and write it. Rather, the ability to speak and write emerges as a result of language acquisition. It also asserts that grammar study and memorization of vocabulary play a small, peripheral role in language and literacy development.

How Bilingual Education Helps

Bilingual education is now defined as the use of the first language to accelerate second-language development (Crawford & Krashen, 2007). This happens in two ways:

- By providing subject-matter teaching in the first language. This gives students background knowledge in the form of subject-matter knowledge and knowledge of the world, which helps make the input they hear and read in English more comprehensible.
- By providing literacy development in the first language—a shortcut to second-language literacy. A great deal of research confirms that once literacy is developed in the first language, it rapidly transfers to the second language, even if the writing systems are different.

How Gov. Schwarzenegger Profited From De Facto Bilingual Education

Governor Schwarzenegger completed high school in his native Austria before beginning his competitive bodybuilding career. This means that he had a reasonable amount of background

information, and did not have to struggle to become literate in English (his high school education also included 7 years of English study as noted later).

This is far more education than many immigrants to the United States have. A study of adults age 24 and over in 2000 born in Mexico, revealed that only 30% of them had graduated high school, and 11% had no schooling at all (Grieco, 2004).

Governor Schwarzenegger's education in Austria was not limited to the usual high school experiences. He took business classes in high school, and later enrolled in a business school in Munich in order to run a gym he managed there more efficiently (Halperin, 2010)—knowledge that was of great use to him later in the United States.

There is also evidence, contrary to his assertions, that Schwarzenegger used German considerably often after he arrived in the United States (see Appendix A).

SUPPLYING COMPREHENSIBLE INPUT IN ENGLISH DIRECTLY

Bilingual programs also supply comprehensible input in the second language directly, through ESL classes and by teaching subject matter in the second language in a comprehensible way (known as “sheltered subject-matter teaching”). Well-organized bilingual programs provide ESL immediately, from the first day, and begin content teaching in English as soon as this language can be made comprehensible.

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Classes in Austria

Governor Schwarzenegger, as noted earlier, had 7 years of English instruction in school in Austria. According to reports, this did not result in extraordinarily high competence in English, but gave him a definite head start. His onetime girlfriend, Barbara Outland, wrote that, “The new settler had spent seven years studying English in his Austrian school system. Never fond of schoolwork, he had only picked up a crude understanding of the language” (Outland Baker, 2006, p. 27). (For details on his English competence on arriving in the United States, see Appendix B). Despite this, Gov. Schwarzenegger clearly had much more competence in English than the typical, unschooled immigrant has upon arriving in the United States.

ESL Classes in the United States

Soon after his arrival in California, Schwarzenegger enrolled in ESL classes at a local community college:

I remember coming into this building here to register for English 45, which was English for Foreign Students, and this was the first class I wanted to attend. . . . And so we had such great joy that I came back for a second class, and for a third class. (Schwarzenegger, 2005, para. 4)

Many adult immigrants take ESL classes in American schools, which are indeed of help, but there is a huge shortage of places in ESL classes. Tucker (2006) investigated 176 providers of these classes for adults, and reported that 57.4% had a waiting list, ranging from a few weeks to more than 4 years. In fact, some programs have simply dropped the whole idea of waiting lists because of the “extreme demand” (p. 6). Tucker concluded that there is no lack of “motivation to

learn” among immigrants. Rather, “the extreme demands for ESL services far exceed the available supply” (p. 10). Even if adults are lucky enough to get into a program, “[M]ost ESL providers simply introduce students to English” (p. 5).

Content Study in English

As is done in quality bilingual programs, as noted earlier, Schwarzenegger continued his studies after completing a series of ESL classes, first taking a required English class for regular students. This was followed by business classes—a subject he already had background knowledge in, thanks to coursework and experience in his first language. Schwarzenegger enrolled in various business, microeconomics, macroeconomics, accounting, and computer classes at Santa Monica City College, and later at the University of California at Los Angeles (Schwarzenegger, 2005). He used these credits to help earn an academic degree from the University of Wisconsin in Superior (Halperin, 2010; Leigh, 1990; Mathews, 2006).

A few lucky adult immigrants get the right courses in community college, but there is a huge shortage of these classes and of qualified teachers, and the few classes that are available are mostly at the beginning level (Tucker, 2006). Very few immigrant adults are able to find a coordinated program of the kind Gov. Schwarzenegger had at Santa Monica College.

MORE DIRECT SOURCES OF COMPREHENSIBLE INPUT IN ENGLISH IN THE UNITED STATES: GETTING BY WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM HIS FRIENDS

Schwarzenegger had another advantage few immigrants had: A number of very helpful friends supplied him with English input and valuable information about the world around him. Once in America, Schwarzenegger surrounded himself with a wide network of English-speaking friends and acquaintances, which included roommates, gym impresarios, and bodybuilders; this helped him make progress in English (Leigh, 1990).

Barbara Outland Baker

The person providing the most support was Barbara Outland. Schwarzenegger met Outland in July 1969, only a few months after his arrival in the United States, at a restaurant in Santa Monica where she was working as a waitress while studying to become an English teacher at San Diego State University (Schwarzenegger & Hall, 1977).

Schwarzenegger showed significant improvement in his command of English throughout the approximately 6 years of their relationship, thanks to Outland’s teaching background and expertise as a reading specialist, which helped her understand his needs as an English learner:

He teased me incessantly about my rapid speech, so I slowed to a snail’s pace and dropped my vocabulary level to match and lift his few hundred words. He gave me an open invitation to correct his grammar, always pushing me to stretch his English. Through pantomimes and laughter, we’d discuss his bodybuilding career, politics, relationships, psychology, philosophy, nutrition, college, travel, movies . . . (Outland Baker, 2006, p. 40)

As Schwarzenegger's English continued to improve, so did the depth of his conversations with Outland. According to her recollection, Schwarzenegger always appeared interested in learning the new language not as an end in itself, but as a means of sharing and advancing his knowledge of current issues affecting American, as well as other, societies. Thus, despite his initial limitations in English, their conversations included Kennedy conspiracy theories, Vietnam veterans' returns to the United States, civil wars in Biafra and Bangladesh, Arab-Israeli conflicts following the assassination of Olympic Israeli athletes in Munich, or gangs fighting for territory (Outland Baker, 2006). These conversations were determinant in Schwarzenegger's subsequent mastery of English, as he himself gratefully acknowledged in the foreword to Outland's book: "Who knows where I'd be today if it weren't for her lessons!" (Outland Baker, 2006, p. ix).

In addition, Outland also helped Schwarzenegger with writing:

We would spend exasperating hours defining his exactness, whether to competitors, sponsors of contests, bodybuilding officials, businessmen, or pamphlet clients. We evolved from dictation to having him write a rough draft that I would refine. Then, he would revise, and I would retype. Arnold was a perfectionist of nuance (Outland Baker, 2006, p. 79)

Frank Zane

Schwarzenegger benefited from personal math and algebra lessons taught by Frank Zane, also a world-class bodybuilder (Leamer, 2005; Leigh, 1990). Zane, a high school math teacher, was "the only intellectual among [Schwarzenegger's] daily bodybuilding gang, with Frank's interests matching his devotion to his body's success: mathematics, nutrition, Buddhism, and psychology" (Outland Baker, 2006, p. 112).

Joe Weider

Once in California, Schwarzenegger reported that he sought Joe Weider's advice in an attempt to better understand the intricacies of American business. Weider's expertise as both a bodybuilder and entrepreneur was particularly beneficial for Schwarzenegger at the time of starting his own marketing company:

Because of my business education and the practical aspects of business I learned from Joe Weider, I felt I was equipped to go ahead with my own enterprises. I established a series of mail-order training courses, which enabled me to help educate thousands of bodybuilders all over the world. (Schwarzenegger & Hall, 1977, p. 108)

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Table 1 summarizes "Arnold's advantages"—the advantages he had that typical adult immigrants do not have.

Before he came to the United States, Governor Schwarzenegger had a high school education, which meant literacy in the first language, facilitating the development of English literacy, as well as background knowledge, which makes the world more comprehensible. In contrast, only 30% of adult Mexican immigrants in the United States have had a high school education. He also

TABLE 1
Arnold's Advantages

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Schwarzenegger</i>	<i>ELL</i>
Before coming to the United States		
Background L1	Yes	No
Literacy in L1	Yes	No
CI in English		
EFL	Yes	No
Friends	Yes	No
In the United States		
CI sources	Schwarzenegger	ELL
EFL classes	Yes	No
ESL classes	Yes	No
Advanced ESL	Yes	No
Higher education	Yes	No
Friends	Yes	?
Print	Yes	No

Note. ELL = English language learner: adult English language acquirers from Mexico; L1 = first language; CI = comprehensible input; EFL = English as a foreign language; ESL = English as a second language.

had taken business classes taught in his own language, which provided him with the necessary background to understand subsequent classes on the same and similar topics once in the United States.

Gov. Schwarzenegger's high school education included EFL classes. Also, before coming to the United States, Schwarzenegger traveled widely and made the acquaintance of many English speakers. Most immigrants have not had these experiences.

After arriving in the United States, Gov. Schwarzenegger was able to enroll in beginning and intermediate ESL classes. He was then successful in regular classes, thanks to his increased proficiency in English and background in business. Many adult immigrants have a hard time enrolling even in beginning ESL classes.

Gov. Schwarzenegger also had a helpful circle of English-speaking friends and acquaintances, who provided him with valuable information, as well as comprehensible input in English. He also took the advice of his teachers and read in English—a powerful source of comprehensible input not easily available to adult immigrants with very low English literacy, limited funds, and limited access to high-quality libraries (Krashen, 2004).

Schwarzenegger's case is not atypical. In fact, every successful case we have studied of adult immigrants who succeeded and who claimed they did it by "immersion" had similar advantages (Ramos & Krashen, 1997, 2001). They all, in other words, had "de facto bilingual education"—sources of comprehensible input in English and a background in the first language that helped them develop English literacy rapidly and understand the world around them.

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APPENDIX A

HOW MUCH GERMAN DID GOVERNOR SCHWARZENEGGER SPEAK AFTER COMING TO THE UNITED STATES?

Schwarzenegger declared that "I did not, or very rarely, spoke German to anyone" (Office of the Governor, 2007) after coming to the United States. One of us (SK) described a very different reality in a letter to the editor published in the *Daily Breeze*:

I was a regular weightlifter at Venice Beach and Gold's Gym when Arnold and his pal Franco Columbu first arrived in California. I noticed that they spoke German all the time with each other and kept it up for years. (Krashen, 2007)

Subsequent investigations revealed that Gov. Schwarzenegger spoke German quite a bit in the United States.

Upon his arrival in California, Columbu "moved in with Arnold, sharing a Santa Monica bachelor pad, plus the terrors of learning English" (Andrews, 2003, p. 39). As noted by Andrews, Columbu's limitations in the language were greater than Schwarzenegger's: "When Franco Columbu, whose English was worse than Arnold's, came to stay with the Bennetts, Arnold would help him out by naming the food Franco pointed to on the table" (p. 26). Hence, given Schwarzenegger's and Columbu's linguistic limitations in English, the fact that Schwarzenegger did not speak a language other than German when he met Columbu, and Columbu's extended

residency in Germany, it seems logical to think that German was their preferred language of communication, which corroborates the content of the letter to the editor previously cited.

In fact, Barbara Outland, Schwarzenegger's girlfriend at the time, resented the two friends' constant use of German in her presence: "You two do nothing but speak German in front of me, never bothering to translate" (Outland Baker, 2006, p. 70). Much of her aggravation resulted from her belief that their contended use of German to "crack jokes" (p. 39) also included talking about her (Leamer, 2005). When admonished, Schwarzenegger felt obliged to explain that, "Franco is like my brusser, Bah-bah-rah. You vil just have to get used to him. Ve vil try to speak more Enklish in front of you" (Outland Baker, 2006, p. 70).

Interestingly, speaking German proved to be particularly beneficial for Schwarzenegger on various occasions. For example, during Schwarzenegger's participation in the 1980 Mr. Olympia title in Sydney, Australia, Columbu noticed that the unevenness of the stage lighting favored those competitors standing to the left of the platform, opposite Schwarzenegger's. Realizing the likely negative implications of this contingency on Schwarzenegger's judges' scores, Columbu leapt onto the stage:

He spoke quickly to Arnold in German, drawing the attention of the other competitors. As they started to protest, Arnold stepped off the posing platform, seized Franco's arm and raised it in the air as if to introduce the champion to the crowd.

They gave Franco a standing ovation. While this cheering continued, Arnold elbowed his way back into the lineup on the left side of the platform and resumed posing in the best-lit position of all. This interruption rattled the other competitors. What were Arnold and Franco discussing in German? I could see the confusion on their faces as they looked angrily toward Arnold. As they did so, the contest began swinging in Arnold's favor; the other competitors had just lost their concentration. Some had even lost their pump. Meanwhile Franco leapt offstage into the front row where he continued yelling until Arnold was declared the winner. (Butler, 1990, p. 146)

Moreover, Schwarzenegger used German to converse with various members of his then girlfriend's, Maria Shriver, family, among them Rose and Ted Kennedy and Sargent Shriver (all three of them spoke German).

Rose Kennedy was great. She speaks perfect German; so we spent the whole weekend talking to each other in my native tongue. We went for several long walks together and talked about Austria at length. The odd thing was that she knew everything about my country. Music, art, opera, books, even history! I was on my toes every second with her. (Leigh, 1990, p. 154)

According to Mathews (2006), Sargent Shriver had learned German while spending parts of 1934 and 1936 as an exchange student in Germany, not far from the Austrian border. Shriver enjoyed sharing his views on government and politics with Schwarzenegger, whom he called "the sponge" (p. 40) because of his interest in Shriver's knowledge and experience in people and program management. Their discussions in German shifted "from sober economics to Soviet premiers, European law, the Iranian revolution, dog psychiatrists and women's breasts" (Andrews, 2003, p. 68). In this regard, Barbara Outland (Outland Baker, 2006) explained that the knowledge learned in these conversations added to Schwarzenegger's already developed interest in public policy, which allowed him to establish comparisons with that of Austria and Germany while helping him develop a better understanding of American policies and other issues he later applied to his entrepreneurial and political careers. As for Schwarzenegger, he seemed to enjoy the company of his future in-laws because of his strong belief in surrounding himself with individuals

possessing well-developed, intellectual capabilities: “I like hanging around successful people. If you hang around low foreheads, it means you are a low forehead” (Andrews, 2003, p. 68).

APPENDIX B

HOW MUCH ENGLISH DID ARNOLD KNOW BEFORE COMING TO THE UNITED STATES?

The issue of Schwarzenegger’s knowledge of English prior to his arrival in America has been somewhat contentious because of the existing disagreement on his preexisting command of the language. Thus, Schwarzenegger himself explained that, at the beginning of his stay in the United States, “I could not speak the language well at all. I couldn’t listen to the news. I couldn’t read the papers. . . . It was the most difficult time in my life” (Leigh, 1990, p. 81). Along the same lines, Rick Wayne, a columnist for the magazine *Muscle & Fitness*, concurred that, “Here was this guy who could barely put two English words together” (p. 55); and Andrews (2003) described a conversation in which Wag Bennett, owner of a gym, “gazes at the bench once occupied by a nineteen-year-old Austrian who could speak barely a word of English” (p. 255). Art Zeller, a photographer for bodybuilding magazine publisher, Joe Weider, commented, however, that, “[T]he new arrival spoke English tolerably well” (Leigh, 1990, p. 87); Zeller’s comment is consistent with what can be observed in transcripts of Schwarzenegger’s first English-speaking interview on March 8, 1968:

Please understand that I am like ordinary man only bigger and stronger. . . . I have normal feelings like other men. Why do people treat me with fun just because I am biggest strongest man in world? (Leigh, 1990, p. 73)

I hope you are not going to go away and write that I am, how do you say, all brain and no brawns? (Leigh, 1990, p. 74)

As noted before, Schwarzenegger was by no means a stranger to English prior to his arrival in the United States, having studied it in school in Austria and having established numerous contacts with English speakers in Germany, England, and South Africa at the beginning of his bodybuilding career.

His English-speaking acquaintances in Austria and Germany included Helmut Knaur, “a big bear of a man [who] spoke English and tried to teach Schwarzenegger the language by having him read copies of *Playboy*” (Mathews, 2006, p. 33); and Karl Gerstl, a doctor who translated bodybuilding magazines written in English for Schwarzenegger (Schwarzenegger & Hall, 1977). Outside Austria and Germany, Schwarzenegger also knew Wag and Dianne Bennett, owners of an East London gym, who invited him to spend time at their home in England with them and their six children (Andrews, 2003; Leigh, 1990). During this time, “Dianne had taken it upon herself to teach Arnold English, working with him for hours at a time” (Halperin, 2010, p. 68). Furthermore, Schwarzenegger spent time in London with a Mr. R, described by Leigh as a “top British industrialist” (p. 62) who “didn’t speak a word of German” (p. 64). Schwarzenegger stayed in touch with Mr. R for 2 years until he went to America. Finally, Reg Park, a South African-based English bodybuilder, invited Schwarzenegger to spend Christmas with him and his family in South Africa. Despite the Parks’s acknowledgment of Schwarzenegger’s English as “rudimentary” (Leamer, 2005, p. 51), their conversations revolved around a wide range of topics, some of them as controversial as apartheid (Leigh, 1990).